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GIACOMO LEOPARDI.

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ESSAYS, DIALOGUES, AND THOUGHTS
OF COUNT GIACOMO LEOPARDI
TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES, BY MAJOR-GENERAL
PATRICK MAXWELL.

LONDON: WALTER SCOTT, LTD.

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οὐ μὲν γάρ τι πού ἐστιν οὐζυρώτερον ἀνδρὸς
πάντων, ὅσα τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνέει τε καὶ ἔρπει.

Poi di tanto adoprar, di tanti moti
D'ogni celeste, ogni terrena cosa,
Girando senza posa,
Per tornar sempre là donde son mosse;
Uso alcuno, alcun frutto
Indovinar non so.”

—LEOPARDI.

INTRODUCTION.

It is impossible to proceed far in any study of Italian literature, without coming face to face with the striking personality of Giacomo Leopardi. In England, however, except to scholars and men of special sympathies, the man and his writings would seem to be as yet comparatively little known. And this is the more remarkable since, not in Italy alone, but also in Germany, France, and other European countries, his pathetic story and his powerful writings have from the first attracted profound interest. His poems have long since been translated into French and German, and more recently into English also; the greater part of his prose writings have made their appearance in the form of translations on the Continent, and some of them in this country; while biographies and literary notices of this gifted and unhappy man have been of constant and increasing recurrence in the principal countries of Europe. He died at the age of thirty-eight. Yet in his short and troubled course, and in the face of varied difficulties and obstacles, this remarkable man won for himself the very first rank in the threefold capacity of linguist, poet, and philosopher; and left behind him monumental works in each of these three fields of intellectual activity.

His story has been so often told, and is so accessible to those who desire to know it in detail, that it will be sufficient in this place to reproduce it in the merest outline.

Giacomo Leopardi was born on the 29th June 1798, in the ancestral mansion of his family, at Recanati, a small

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country town in the March of Ancona, and about fifteen miles from the latter city. He was the eldest son of the Count Monaldo Leopardi, and of his wife Adelaide, a daughter of the noble house of Antici. Thus both his parents were of ancient and patrician stock; but the fortunes of the Count were dilapidated, and they had not been augmented by his marriage. From this circumstance, not only in his childhood, but throughout his brief career, Giacomo suffered from the pinch of that most painful form of poverty, the poverty of those who have seen better days. His father had something more than a tincture of a certain sort of old-fashioned learning, and he was influenced by a marked though misguided literary taste. He seems to have been a man of narrow views, and harsh and gloomy temperament. His poverty imposed on him the necessity of a strict, if not exaggerated domestic economy, in which he was only too assiduously supported by his wife, who has been represented as of a hard and unsympathetic character. They appear never to have understood or appreciated their gifted son. Throughout his early years they treated him with severity or contempt, and although when he became famous his father at least seems to have made some endeavours to recover his affection, yet the relations between his parents and himself appear to have been at no time those of cordiality or mutual confidence.

In his early years young Leopardi had for his instructors two village ecclesiastics named Giuseppe Torres and Sebastiano Sanchini. With the former of these he studied till he was nine years old, with the latter till he reached the age of fourteen. Under these teachers he was grounded chiefly in Latin and the elements of philosophy. Considering the state of learning at that time existing in Italy, it is not probable that these two priests had it in their power to impart much to the brilliant boy, but however this may be, it is certain that he soon left them far behind, and dispensed with their slender assistance. When fourteen years old he became his own teacher, and rapidly piled up his vast stock of erudition by omnivorous study in the ancestral library of

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his father's house, with, possibly, at least at first, some little aid and direction from the old Count. His industry was phenomenal, and he seems to have equalled the younger Scaliger in his prodigious power of acquiring and assimilating knowledge, and more especially of mastering the difficulties of language. His intense desire from an early age was to learn Greek—a remarkable desire, since at that time the study of that language was almost totally neglected in Italy. In this pursuit his tutors could afford him no assistance; he therefore attacked the subject single-handed with extraordinary enthusiasm and assiduity, and in an incredibly short time he had read all the most important of the ancient authors, and absorbed their teaching to a degree which could hardly have been credited, had he not given to the world proof of it in the form of works which are monuments of his precocious erudition.

His friend and biographer, Antonio Ranièri, has recorded that while he was yet early in his teens he was recognised as a portent of learning by such authorities as Pietro Giordani, Caccellieri, and the celebrated Swedish *savant*, Akerblad; and a little later he enjoyed the same appreciation on the part of Niebuhr, Creuzer, Boissonade, and many others of the most eminent scholars of the day, in France, Germany, and England. Before he was twenty he had mastered English, French, and Spanish, and had acquired no mean knowledge of German. In the two former he wrote easily and idiomatically. He is also said to have attained such a knowledge of Hebrew that he was able to dispute in that tongue with learned Jewish Rabbis of Ancona.

In 1814, when only a little over sixteen years of age, he wrote a revision of the text of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, with an illustrative commentary; a work which proved serviceable to no less a scholar than Creuzer, and regarding which Sainte-Beuve has recorded that if a man had devoted his whole life to the study of Plotinus, he would still find something fresh and profitable to extract from this wonderful performance of a mere boy. In 1815

he composed a treatise on the *Popular Errors of the Ancients*, which was in itself a stupendous monument of his learning. This work, which was not actually published till after his death, is a veritable mine of erudition, and bristles with citations from the entire field of ancient and modern literature. In the same year he published a complete translation of Moschus, accompanied by a critical dissertation. In 1817 he composed two Greek odes in the manner of Anacreon, regarding which Giordani said that Anacreon himself could not have distinguished them from his own. He also translated into Italian parts of the *Odyssey* and of the *Æneid*, as well as portions of Xenophon, Isocrates, Epictetus, and other writers. In 1817, too, he published in blank verse a Hymn to Neptune, which purported to be a translation of a long lost ancient Greek manuscript, and which, in addition to its inherent beauties, was so exact a reproduction of the Hellenic mould of thought that it completely imposed on the most learned of the few men of learning then to be found in Rome, including the custodian of the Vatican library, who resented the supposed abstraction of the imaginary original from the treasures under his care. When twenty he wrote his *Annotations* on the Chronicle of Eusebius; they were not published till 1823.

Such are but a few of the works he produced; and besides these and others, he wrote many volumes of philological research and criticism, the mere catalogue of which is amazing; while his mastery of Greek alone commands the more wonder when we reflect that in his time—it indeed it be not so still—the knowledge of this language was at the lowest conceivable ebb in Italy, so that, as Mr. Gladstone has remarked, it is as if a boy in this country were to acquire Sanscrit without a teacher; to acquire a perfect familiarity with its structure and its spirit; and to do so in an incredibly short space of time. The whole wonderful story reads like some extravagant exaggeration.

Up to this period Leopardi had written but little poetry. His first poem of any note was indeed written so early as

in 1817; but the bulk of his verse was not produced till after the year 1824. His philosophic studies and writings also belong to the later period of his short career.

The penalty had to be paid for labours so excessive and exhausting. Constitutionally weak from his birth, if not slightly malformed, when he reached the age of seventeen his efforts had sapped his scanty strength, and he was physically a wreck. It is inconceivable how those around him should have passively permitted things to come to such a state, but it is one among the many proofs which exist of the indifference of his parents to his welfare.¹ For the remainder of his short life Giacomo Leopardi was a hopeless invalid. His eyesight grew feebler and feebler; in 1819 he was for a long time unable to read, and nearly unable to write. At times his sufferings were acute, and he was nearly always a victim to the most gloomy forms of nervous depression. As early as in 1816, in describing the varied sufferings which had even then overtaken him, he writes:—“Add to all this the obstinate, black, horrible, barbarous melancholy which consumes, grinds, and devours me, and which is aggravated by study, and which, if I abstain from study, increases.”

He now loathed his enforced confinement at Recanati, and yearned to visit the outer world, and especially the world of letters. But his parents were deaf to his urgent and repeated entreaties to be permitted to take this step. At this painful period indeed he found some solace in the society of his brother Carlo, and of his sister Paolina, the latter of whom especially was very dear to him; but in his enforced abstinence from study he became a prey to an *ennui* which amounted to agony, and to which frequent though indirect allusion is made in his writings. About this time he formed the acquaintance of the eminent Italian scholar, Pietro Giordani, from whose friendship and correspondence he derived some happiness. On his suggestion and with the hardly-won consent of his parents, his new

¹ See Madame Villari's *Study* on the relations of Leopardi and his father.

friend even paid a short visit to the uncongenial home of the old Count at Recanati, in the hope of moving him to accede to his son's yearning desire for change. But his father continued impervious to all such proposals, while his mother sternly frowned them down. The galling sense of subjection to the authority of a harsh and unsympathetic father may be traced in the very first of his *Thoughts*.

At length his condition appears to have become unendurable, and he formed the resolve, desperate in an Italian youth of that period and of his up-bringing, to endeavour to escape from Recanati. To this end he wrote to Count Broglio, the Governor of Macerata, for a passport. But Broglio, concluding that the application had the approval of the elder Leopardi, sent the document enclosed in a letter addressed to him; the scheme was thus discovered and frustrated. Baffled in all hope of escaping from Recanati, Leopardi sunk for a time into a stupor of despair. He could scarcely read or write, he could hardly even think; but sat solitary in his chamber "listening to the ticking of the clock."

Gradually, however, he was restored to some degree of tranquillity; and in November 1822 his father at length permitted him to visit Rome, actuated thereto in all probability by the hope that he might there be induced to enter the church, for which he had been originally intended. At Rome, disillusionment awaited him. The ideal society of which he had dreamt while in Recanati seemed to have melted away, and he found to his bitter disappointment that the great bulk of the Roman society of that time was composed of frivolous and commonplace persons. Nor was this impression merely the natural reaction from the exaggerated and unreasonable expectations which he had formed in his seclusion at Recanati. The period of his visit was that of the French domination, and, with a few exceptions, chiefly foreigners, the society in Rome at that time was only too deserving of contempt. Here, however, he made, and thoroughly enjoyed, the personal acquaintance of the learned and amiable

Niebuhr, then Prussian Minister at the Pontifical court. Through his good offices indeed he was actually offered a chair of Greek philosophy in Berlin; an offer, however, which he was reluctantly obliged to decline, on the sufficient ground that his constitution would be unequal to the rigours of the Prussian winter. In reference to this particular passage of his life, Mr. Gladstone quotes the following extract from a communication by Niebuhr to Bunsen:—

“Conceive my astonishment when I saw standing before me, pale and shy; a mere youth, in a poor little chamber, of weakly figure, and obviously in bad health; he being by far the first, rather indeed the only Greek philologist in Italy; the author of critical observations which would have gained honour for the first philologist of Germany, and only twenty-two years old.¹ He had grown to be thus profoundly learned without school, without teacher, without help, without encouragement in his father's sequestered house.”

Niebuhr also did his best to interest the pontifical Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, in his behalf; but without effect, in consequence of his persistent refusal to enter the church. In Rome too he made the acquaintance of Bunsen, the friend and successor of Niebuhr. And although disappointed of any regular or remunerative employment during his residence at Rome, Leopardi busied himself with various archæological and literary studies.

In May 1823 he returned for a while to Recanati, and during the next ten years of his life, when the condition of his health permitted him to do so, he devoted himself to poetry and philosophy and miscellaneous literary work. He visited, and for varying periods resided in, Bologna, Pisa, Florence, and Milan. He wrote about this time for several of the leading Italian journals and reviews, and partly maintained himself thus. In 1830 he left Recanati for the last time; and after desultory visits to Pisa, Rome, and Florence, at which place he was elected an academician of the Crusca, he finally was

¹ Leopardi was only twenty when he wrote the *Annotations* on the Chronicle of Eusebius, here referred to.

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recommended by his physician, as the only hope of prolonging his life, to try the climate of Naples. He went there with his friend Ranieri; and in his house he lingered till his death on June 14th, 1837. He was buried in the little suburban church of San Vitale, on the road to Pozzuoli, not far from the reputed grave of Virgil. Ranieri erected over his tomb a simple monument bearing the sign of the cross, with an inscription written by Giordani.

Ranieri has recorded of his friend that he was of middling stature, and bowed and feeble in frame, his complexion pallid, his head large, with a wide and square brow, his eyes blue and tender in their expression, his nose prominent and slightly aquiline, his voice somewhat soft and faint. According to others, he was of small stature and emaciated. In his writings he has described himself as puny and feeble, and positively unpleasing in his appearance.

Without claiming for him, as not a few have done, a poetic rank equal to that of Dante, all will admit that he was the most distinguished poet of modern Italy. Mr. Gladstone has said of him that "no Italian of the present generation, except Manzoni, even approaches him, and Manzoni in a different order, and perhaps only in a single piece. It is not difficult to perceive that he was endowed in a peculiar degree with most of the faculties which belong to the highest excellence." Matthew Arnold said of him:—

"Leopardi has the very qualities which we have found wanting in Byron. He has the sense for form and style, the passion for just expression, the sure and firm touch of the true artist. Nay, more, he has a grave fulness of knowledge, an insight into the real bearings of the questions which he raises, a power of seizing the real point, a lucidity with which the author of *Cain* has nothing to compare. . . . In like manner, Leopardi is in many points the poetical superior of Wordsworth too. He has a far wider culture than Wordsworth, more mental lucidity, more freedom from illusions as to the real character of the established fact and of reigning conventions; above all, this Italian, with his pure and sure touch, with his fineness of perception, is far more of the artist."

The present volume contains a translation of the greater part of the prose of Leopardi entitled the *Operette morali*, including the whole of the Dialogues, as well as the other essays with the exception of two of minor interest. The greater part of his *Thoughts* also are here given. We may fitly conclude with an extract from Mr. Gladstone on the subject of Leopardi:—

“We cannot hesitate to say that in almost every branch of mental exertion, this extraordinary man seems to have had the capacity of attaining, and generally at a single bound, the very highest excellence. Whatever he does, he does in a manner that makes it his own; not with a forced or affected, but a true originality; stamping upon his work, like other masters, a type that defies all counterfeit. He recalls others as we read him, but always the most remarkable and accomplished in their kind; always by conformity, not by imitation. In the Dorian march of his *terza rima*, the image of Dante comes before us; in his blank verse we think of Milton, whom probably he never read; in his lighter letters, and in the extreme elegance of touch with which he describes mental gloom and oppression, we are reminded of the grace of Cowper; when he touches learned research or criticism, he is copious as Warburton, sagacious and acute as Bentley; the impassioned melancholy of his poems largely recalls his less, though scarcely less, unhappy contemporary Shelley; to translation, we speak however of his prose translations, he brings the lofty conception of his work which enabled Coleridge to produce *his* Wallenstein; among his *Thoughts* there are some worthy of a place beside the *Pensées* of Pascal, or the Moral Essays of Bacon,—and with the style of his philosophic Dialogues neither Hume nor Berkeley need resent a comparison.

“... There are many things in which Christians would do well to follow him: in the warmth of his attachments; in the moderation of his wants; in his noble freedom from the love of money; in his all-conquering assiduity. Nor let us, of inferior and more sluggish clay, omit to learn, as we seem to stand at his tomb, beside the Bay of Naples, in the lonely church of San Vitale, yet another lesson from his career; the lesson of compassion, chastening admiration, towards him; and for ourselves, humility and self-mistrust.”

PATRICK MAXWELL.

October 1893.

GIACOMO LEOPARDI.

Essays, Dialogues, and Thoughts.

HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

It is narrated that all the human beings who in the beginning peopled the earth were created everywhere at the same time, and all as children; and that they were nourished by bees, and goats, and doves, in the same manner as the poets have fabled regarding the nurture of the infant jove. The earth was then much smaller than it now is; almost all the countries which composed it were absolutely level; the firmament was destitute of stars; the ocean had not then been created; and the world exhibited much less variety and magnificence than it does at this time.

Nevertheless mankind took an unwearied delight in the contemplation of earth and sky, and felt an unbounded wonder in beholding them, imagining them to be infinite in extent and perfect in majesty and grace. Moreover, they were regaled by the most elastic and joyous hopes; and as they extracted inexpressible delight from every sensation of their existence, they grew up with much enjoyment, if not with a sense of positive bliss.

But having thus very sweetly passed their infancy and first youth, and having arrived at a more mature age, they

commenced to experience a certain change of sentiment. Inasmuch as the vague expectations which up to that period they had cherished had been renewed from time to time only to be again and again deferred, and had ever failed of realisation, they began to think that little reliance could be placed on them; while as to being contented with the blessings which they possessed, without any hope of their future augmentation, this no longer seemed to them possible. Furthermore, the aspect of the natural phenomena around them, and all the conditions of their daily life, had ceased to afford them anything approaching to the delight which they had yielded in the beginning. Whether this arose from satiety, or from a diminution within themselves of their primitive capacity for enjoyment, it is impossible to determine.

They now wandered over the face of the earth, visiting its most remote regions, which they could easily do, by reason of the flatness of the surface, and because they were not impeded by seas or other obstacles; and after a few years the greater number of them came to perceive that the earth, although undoubtedly large, had yet certain limits of well-defined extent; and that all places on its surface, as well as all its human inhabitants, were only too similar to each other. For these reasons their discontent increased to such a degree that ere they had well passed their youth they were universally possessed by an actual weariness of existence; and by degrees in their more advanced age, and especially in the decline of their years, satiety turning to disgust, some of them fell into such a state of despair that, unable longer to endure the light and the life which in the beginning they had held so dear, they spontaneously put an end to their existence by various modes of self-destruction.

To the gods it seemed a monstrous thing that living creatures should prefer death to life, and that, without necessity or other compelling cause, the vital energy itself should be employed as the instrument for the destruction of its possessor. It can scarcely be said how greedy they marvelled to find their gifts held in such hatred and contempt that the recipients of them should spontaneously cast them off; since it appeared to them that they had endued the world with so many blessings and charms, and invested it with such pleasurable conditions, that existence in it ought to be not endurable only, but ardently prized by all animals, and more especially by man, whom they had formed and fashioned with peculiar care and wondrous excellence. But at the same time, besides being moved by no slight pity for such a degree of human misery as was manifested by these mournful results, they also feared that if such deplorable occurrences should be continued and multiplied, the human race might ere long, in contravention of destiny itself, become extinct; and thus the universe should be robbed of that perfection which characterised it by reason of the existence of our species; and they themselves should be deprived of all the worship and honour which they received from men.

For this reason Jove took thought to ameliorate the condition of the human race, and to provide it with still greater resources for the attainment of happiness. He perceived that men complained principally because their material surroundings were not boundless in extent, nor infinite in beauty, variety, and perfection, as they had at first imagined them to be; but were, on the contrary, at least in their opinion, pitifully confined, in all points imperfect, and grievously monotonous in character; that for these reasons they experienced disgust alike in youth,

in maturity, and in advanced age; and that, yearning for the joys of their earliest years, they prayed fervently to be restored to childhood, and to continue in that condition throughout their whole existence. Jove, however, was unable to accede to this petition, inasmuch as it ran counter to the universal laws of nature, and its concession would be incompatible with the discharge of those functions and aims which, in pursuance of the divine intentions and decrees, mankind were appointed to fulfil. Neither was it in his power to impart his own immortality to mortal creatures; to render matter limitless; or to confer perfection on created things and on human happiness.

Nevertheless, he saw fit to enlarge to some extent the limits of creation, and still further to adorn and embellish the world; and, having formed this resolution, he increased the magnitude of the earth in all directions; and he added to it the ocean, in order that the interposition of its waters between the various inhabited regions might diversify the features of creation, and, by restricting locomotion, might prevent men from too easily discerning its geographical limitations, while at the same time it should present to their view a vivid image of immensity. At that period the newly-created waters first overspread the primeval region of Atlantis; nor only it, but also innumerable other extensive tracts, although the memory of it remains specially embalmed in story, a survival of the lapse of ages. Many regions he depressed, and many he elevated by rearing on them hills and mountains. He broidered the firmament with stars; he rarefied and purged the quality of the atmosphere; and intensified the clearness and the light of day. He augmented and diversified to a degree not previously known the colours of the sky and of the fields. He also intermingled and discriminated

the generations of mankind in such a way that the old age of some should coincide with the childhood and the youth of others. Finally, resolved to multiply the appearances at least of that infinity which men so ardently desired to see,—since he could not grant them its reality,—and willing to feed their imaginations, from the restlessness of which he well knew had proceeded the supposed beatitude of their infancy, he resorted to sundry other expedients. He created the Echo, and concealed it in the caves and valleys of the earth; and he filled the forests with dull and deep reverberations, accompanied by vehement agitation of the trees. At the same time he called into being the entire cohort of dreams; and committed to them the task of deceiving under many forms the minds of men, and of presenting to their imaginations that fulness of fantastic happiness which he well knew could never be substantially attained; together with all those vague and fatuous fancies whereof he himself, however he might desire to do so, and however earnestly men might yearn for such a result, was unable to produce a solitary tangible example.

By these measures of Jove the spirit of man was somewhat renovated and raised, and a fresh charm was imported into life by the general sense of wonder and delight at the new beauty and apparent immensity of earthly things. Moreover, this happy condition of affairs endured longer than that which had preceded it, chiefly by reason of the diversity introduced by Jove in the ages of men, since those who were chilled and wearied by experience of life drew a sort of warmth and consolation from the elasticity and hopefulness of those of greener years. But in the course of time, these innovations having lost the charm of novelty, and the tedium

and disgust of life having returned afresh, men fell into such a state of dejection that there arose at that time, as is commonly believed, the custom referred to in history as practised by certain ancient peoples, in accordance with which, on the birth of any person, the relatives and friends of the family of the new-born infant assembled together to bewail its entrance into life, while the day of death was celebrated with feasting, and congratulations of the dead.¹ Finally, all mankind abandoned themselves to impiety, whether because they imagined themselves to be deserted by Jove, or because it was the natural result of their misery to harden and corrupt even the best dispositions, and to inspire them with a disgust of honesty and rectitude; since it is an error to suppose that human misery was the result of iniquity and transgression against the gods; seeing that, on the contrary, human depravity was the result of human woe.

Accordingly, when the gods chastised the wickedness of men, and took vengeance for their misdeeds, by means of the deluge of Deucalion, the two sole survivors of the universal destruction of our species, Deucalion and Pyrrha, declaring that nothing could remedy the woes of the human race save its total extinction, seated themselves on a rock, and far from deploring or fearing the general fate, invoked death with the most ardent entreaties; and when admonished by Jove that they must repeople the solitude of the earth, so utterly disgusted were they with life that they recoiled from the natural process of reproduction, and taking stones from the cliff at the command of the gods, they cast them over their shoulders, by which means the human race was miraculously restored.

But the events of the past had taught Jove to know

¹ See Herodotus, v. 4; Strabo, Edit. Casaub., 519, etc.

the true nature of men ; and he now perceived that, unlike the other animals, they would never be content with a mere freedom from pain and suffering, but must be for ever craving after the impossible, and perpetually tortured by this desire in proportion as they were exempt from real evils. He therefore resolved to adopt fresh expedients for the conservation of this perverse race. Of these the two principal were these—first, to temper their existence with veritable ills ; and in the next place to involve them in countless laborious occupations, with the view of occupying their restless dispositions, and diverting their minds as far as possible from unprofitable introspection, or at least from their idle yearnings after an unknown and visionary felicity.

To this end he commenced by diffusing among them a varied train of diseases, together with an infinite multitude of other ills. This he did partly in the hope that, by varying the conditions and fortunes of human life, he might arrest satiety in men, and increase their appreciation of their undoubted blessings by contrast with real sufferings. He also deemed it probable that the privation of coveted felicity might prove more tolerable than before to minds exercised by actual tribulation. Finally, he thought by these means to break in and tame the arrogance of men ; to habituate them to bow to necessity ; to reduce them to contentment with their lot ; and to curb the vehemence of their aspirations by the sobering effects of bodily infirmity and stern toil. Moreover, paradoxical as it may appear, he was convinced that men, when vexed by disease, and oppressed by actual calamity, would be less prone than heretofore to lay violent hands on their own lives, since they would now become pusillanimous and feeble of purpose ; whilst their very sufferings would kindle the hope

of amelioration in their lot, and serve to attach them to life, inasmuch as the unhappy ever believe that happiness awaits them on release from their woes, and it is the nature of man to be ever fully persuaded of the probability of such release.

Jove next created storms and tempests of wind and rain; he armed himself with the lightning and the thunder; he gave Neptune the trident; he launched the comets on their orbits, and instituted the eclipses, resolved to strike terror into men from time to time by means of these agencies, together with other portents and terrible phenomena; since he was well assured that the presence of real fears and of substantial dangers would, by occupying their thoughts, reconcile to life, at least for a time, not only the discontented, but even those who most greatly abhorred existence, and were most disposed to escape from it.

Furthermore, in order to prevent the idleness and vacuity of the past, he implanted in the human race new appetites, and a craving for new forms of food, and beverages formerly unknown; which things could not be procured except by undergoing much and arduous toil, whereas in former times, down to the deluge of Deucalion, men had slaked their thirst with water alone; and had supported themselves on the herbs and fruits which the earth and the trees spontaneously yielded them; together with other nutriments of a coarse nature, and easily procured; just as is the practice even at the present day among some rude peoples, such, for example, as the inhabitants of California.¹ He also assigned to the various quarters of the globe, and to the several divisions of the year, diverse climatic characteristics; and whereas, up to that time, the atmosphere had been at all seasons, and in

¹ It should be remembered that this was written sixty years ago.

all places, so benignant and serene that men had felt no need of clothing, now they were under the necessity of providing themselves with such protection, and with much exertion to defend themselves from the inclemency of the heavens.

To Mercury he committed the task of founding the earliest cities, and of discriminating and classifying the human race into peoples and nations and tongues, thereby implanting among them keen rivalries and perpetual discord. He employed the same deity to introduce among men music and song, and those other arts which, on account of their nature and their origin, were, and still are, called divine. He himself imposed laws on the newly-formed nations, and founded among them the various conditions and orders of civil society. Finally, filled with the desire to augment the sources of their happiness, he sent among them certain great spirits or Phantasms, of rare and superhuman properties and form, to whom he committed to a great extent the government and direction of our race. These Phantasms were called respectively Justice, Virtue, Glory, Patriotism, and by other names of a like nature. Among them was one called Love, which at that period for the first time appeared on earth, along with the others just named; since, previously to the adoption of clothing, the sexes had been attracted to each other, not by the sentiment of love, but by a mere impulse of desire, not dissimilar in the men of that time from that which at all times actuates the brutes; precisely as one is attracted to particular forms of food, not by love of them, but by appetite alone.

It was marvellous how much improvement was wrought in the conditions of human life by these divine counsels, and how greatly the new estate of men surpassed in com-

for and happiness that which had preceded the deluge; and this notwithstanding the labours and terrors and sufferings which, previously unknown, had now been imported into their existence. This result proceeded chiefly from the influence of these wondrous Phantasms which have just been mentioned, and which men regarded as a species of *genii* or gods, and whom they worshipped and adored with incredible ardour and zeal for many ages; an ardour and zeal fomented and fanned with infinite effort and effect by their poets and artists, to such a degree that vast numbers of mankind hesitated not to devote their lives and sacrifice their very existence to the worship of one or other of these abstractions; a circumstance which, far from being displeasing to Jove, was viewed by him with extreme satisfaction, if for no other reason, because he judged that men would be the less prone to the wanton rejection of life, the more they felt impelled to employ it in the pursuit of illusions which, if chimerical in their nature, were at least elevated and noble in their character. Furthermore, the duration of these happy results greatly exceeded that of all previous conditions of humanity, for although after many ages their operation manifestly abated, gradually declined, and ultimately came to an end, they yet prevailed so long that, down to a period not very remote from the present time, human life, after having been, by virtue of these influences, for a time almost positively happy, still continued, through the same agency, moderately pleasant and endurable.

The decline of all this comparative happiness was to be traced to various causes: to the multiplication among men of the means of satisfying their desires; to the boundless growth of disparity in human condition introduced by Jove when he founded the earliest commonwealths; to the

indolence and vanity which by these means anew invaded life; and, finally, to the continual diminution in the charm and variety of existence, arising not only from the inherent necessity of things, but also from waning appreciation on the part of men themselves, the invariable result of prolonged fruition. At all events, it is certain that men in course of time again came to experience that disgust with their condition which had tormented them previously to the deluge, and that keen craving after a fanciful felicity alike unknown, and incompatible with the conditions of the universe.

But the total collapse of their prosperity, and the ultimate catastrophe of the early world, arose principally from a cause diverse from those just stated, and it arose in this wise. Among the Phantasms which have been referred to as having been so highly venerated by the men of old, was one, called in their vernacular Wisdom, which, universally honoured like the rest of that band, and specially followed by many, had, in common with its fellow Phantasms, largely contributed to the prosperity of the later ages. Now this Spirit had repeatedly promised and sworn to her followers that she would reveal to them a certain Genius of the loftiest order, called Truth, which she declared to be the mistress of Wisdom herself, and which had never yet visited earth, but perpetually remained seated with the gods in heaven. Nevertheless she, Wisdom, promised by means of her own influence and persuasive powers to draw her thence, and to induce her to walk for a while among men; by which means, and by intercourse with that Spirit, the human race was likely to attain to such a pre-eminence that for profundity of knowledge, excellence of social order, and happiness of life, it would become comparable to the gods themselves.

But how could that which was itself but a shadow and a Phantasm carry its promises into effect, and actually bring Truth to earth? Accordingly, men, after long vainly waiting and trusting in these professions, perceived their vanity and abandoned all hope of their fulfilment. At the same time, hungering for novelty, chiefly on account of the very amenity of their lives, goaded by ambition to rival the gods, and by their craving for that happiness which they believed was to be attained by intercourse with Truth, they assailed Jove with pressing and presumptuous demands that he should, at least for a time, concede to man the actual presence of that most noble Genius. At the same time they upbraided him for having begrudged to his creatures the infinite benefit which they might have derived from her residence on earth, and bewailed to him the hard lot of the human race, renewing their ancient and odious complaints as to the narrowness and poverty of their condition. As to those imposing Phantasms which had occasioned so much comfort in the past ages, they were now for the most part held in little esteem, not because men had discerned their chimerical character, but because the general profanity and decay of morals were such that men had ceased to respect anything; and they now railed against the gods, and blasphemously spurned even the precious gift of these beneficent Spirits, complaining that the earth had never been graced by the presence of any but the inferior Genii; while the superior ones, by whom the human race might most fitly be guided, were held too precious for such a mission, and were not permitted so much as to place their feet on this inferior quarter of the universe.

Many other things had for a long time alienated from men the benevolence of Jove. This result indeed had been produced by their unexampled vices and crimes,

which for number and atrocity now greatly exceeded the profligacy which had been punished by the deluge. He was also altogether exasperated by their restless insatiable disposition, in spite of the experiences they had undergone; and he now perceived it to be certain that no conceivable measures could conduce to their tranquillity, far less to their happiness; that no condition could content them, and no position satisfy them; since, even if he were willing to extend a thousand-fold the dimensions and delights of the earth, mankind, alike covetous of the infinite and incapable of enjoying it, would in a short time come to regard their condition as confined and intolerable and contemptible. But in the end their insensate and arrogant demands for the temporary presence of Truth so moved the indignation of the god that he resolved to lay aside all pity, and to inflict perpetual punishment on the human race, by condemning it to endure throughout the ages a misery far exceeding any which it had yet experienced. To this end he resolved to send Truth, not merely to make a brief sojourn among men, as they had demanded, but to take up her eternal domicile among them; and, withdrawing from them the pleasing and illusory Phantasms which he had previously placed on earth, to render her perpetual mistress and director of the human race.

When the other gods marvelled at this resolution, conceiving it calculated to result in an undue exaltation of our state, and in the diminution of their own superiority, Jove removed their objections by pointing out, not only that some of the Genii, however powerful, were the reverse of beneficent in their action, but also that the nature of Truth in particular was such that it was by no means to be assumed that she would produce the same results among men as she did among the gods. For whereas she

exhibited to the gods the fulness of their beatitude, she would reveal to men, and keep constantly present to their minds, the depth of their infelicity, and demonstrate to them that this condition was not the mere result of accident, but was inherent in the nature of their lot, and incapable of being remedied or avoided by any possibility so long as their existence endured. He further reminded them that the intensity of all suffering was proportioned to the true perception of its existence; and that it was of the essence of calamity that it was ever more grievous to the sufferer, the more he was alive to its presence; and this being so, it might be conceived how destructive of happiness the presence of this Genius would prove to men, since by means of it they would clearly perceive the falsity of all mundane joys, and the nonentity and vanity of all the conditions of their lot, except their sufferings alone.

Thus, too, men would be deprived even of hope, by means of which, more than by any other solace, they had from the beginning of things till now been enabled to endure the ills of life; and thus, hoping for nought, and perceiving no adequate end or aim in any sort of exertion, they would sink into such neglect and abhorrence of all elevated and noble effort, that the condition of the living would be little preferable to that of the dead. Nevertheless, in this condition of torpor and despair, their old congenital craving for boundless happiness would continue to vex and torment them even more than before, since it would no longer be dulled or distracted by any variety of aim, or by the exhilaration of action. At the same time they would be robbed of the faculty of imagination, which alone was able, in part at least, to satisfy their yearnings after that impossible felicity which is by the nature of things unattainable and incapable of being realised either by gods or men.

‘Furthermore,’ said the god, ‘all those illusive semblances of infinitude which I introduced into the world on purpose to amuse them, and feed them to the top of their bent with vague, and far-reaching aspirations, will now fail to console them, by reason of the enlightenment which they will acquire from Truth; so much so that earth and the other regions of creation, which even before seemed to them small and restricted, will in future appear to them absolutely insignificant in extent, when they shall become versed in the *arcana* of nature; since the limits of visible things invariably appear confined in proportion as the boundaries of science expand. Finally, all those Phantasms which formerly charmed mankind having been removed from the earth, their lingering influence will be extinguished by the teachings of Truth, since man, instructed by her, will acquire a due appreciation of their vanity. In this manner human life will be bereft of all savour and all objective attraction, whether of thought or action; the zest and charm of existence will be everywhere cancelled; the distinctions of nations and countries will disappear; men will again seek to resolve themselves into one nation, as was the case in the beginning; and will profess universal love towards all their fellow-creatures, while in reality the human species will be broken up and dispersed into as many peoples as the individuals who compose it. Having no special native country to claim their particular affection, and no foreigners to attract their special hatred, each will hate all his fellow-men, and love himself alone. From this condition of things infinite and varied distresses will arise; and yet, in spite of all their woes, men will not have the courage to terminate their lives, since the influence of Truth will render them pusillanimous as well as wretched; and while it will add exceedingly to the bitterness of their

existence, it will deprive them of the resolution to end it by self-destruction.

From these words of Jove it appeared to the other gods that the lot of man was likely to become harsh and terrible to a degree incompatible with divine benevolence. Jove, however, proceeded to state that some small modicum of comfort should be left to men from the consolations of that Phantasm which they called Love, and which he was disposed to leave on earth, although he had resolved to remove the others; and he added that Truth herself, powerful as she was, and ever in active operation, should not be permitted to drive Love from our planet, or even to overcome it, save on rare occasions. Thus the life of man, equally occupied in the worship of Love and of Truth, should be divided, as it were, into two portions, and the Phantasm should share with the Genius the empire of the affairs and thoughts of man. All other aims, with the exception of a few of minor consideration, should cease to occupy the thoughts of mankind. In advanced age, the failure of the consolations of Love should be compensated by a species of passive contentment with existence, as happens in the case of other animals; and men would cling to life by an instinct of self-preservation, not from the hope of any satisfaction that it was capable of yielding.

Accordingly, having withdrawn from the earth all of the pleasing Phantasms except Love, the least noble of them all, Jove sent Truth among men, and assigned to her a perpetual position of authority on earth. From this proceeded all those mournful effects which he had predicted; but in addition to these a marvellous circumstance was observed. Prior to her arrival on earth, when she enjoyed neither power nor authority among men, she had been worshipped by them in numerous temples, and propitiated

by countless sacrifices. But now that she had descended to earth invested with sovereign authority and had become personally known to men, unlike the case of all other celestial beings, which the more they become manifest, the more they are venerated, Truth so vexed the minds of men, and so filled them with aversion, that though compelled to obey her, they refused to worship her. Moreover, while the other Phantasms aforementioned used to be highly revered and loved by those over whom they exercised their influence, this Genius excited the most fierce maledictions and the most profound hatred in those over whom she had the most pronounced dominion. But inasmuch as men were unable either to evade or to resist her despotism, they lived in that state of supreme misery which they now endure, and will ever have to endure.

At a later period however pity, which is never wholly extinguished in celestial breasts, stirred the heart of Jove by the spectacle of so great unhappiness, and more especially when it had to be endured by certain men distinguished by acuteness of understanding, conjoined with nobility of sentiment and integrity of life, whom he perceived to be oppressed and afflicted even more than their fellows by the power and the hard sway of this Genius. Now in ancient times, when Justice, Virtue, and the other Phantasms of that class influenced human affairs, the gods had been wont from time to time to visit their creatures, one or other of them descending to earth for that purpose, and signifying their presence there in various ways; a custom which had ever been attended by the greatest benefit either to the whole human race, or to certain of the individuals composing it. But when manners again fell into corruption, and life became sunk in every form of iniquity, the gods abandoned for a long period all converse with man. Now

never, Jove, compassionating our extreme unhappiness, asked the Immortals whether any of them were disposed to visit our species as they had been wont to do, in order to console their human progeny in their great distress, and more especially those of them who, by reason of their comparatively superior character, appeared undeserving of this universal suffering. At this all were silent. But at last the deity Love, the son of the celestial Venus, who bore the same name as the Phantasm similarly called, but differed widely from it in character, virtue, and mode of operation, and whose compassionate nature distinguished him even among the gods, volunteered to undertake the mission proposed by Jove, and to descend from heaven, whose precincts he had never before quitted, since the gods held him in such affection that they had never yet suffered him to leave their society even for the shortest period. And although many of the earlier generations of men, deluded by various machinations and frauds on the part of the Phantasm of the same name, had from time to time believed that the great god Love had appeared among them, yet it is certain that he never deigned to visit the earth prior to its subjection to the empire of Truth.

Since that time he has been wont to descend to earth at intervals, though his visits have ever been rare, and his sojourn on all occasions brief; and this not only by reason of the general unworthiness of the human race, but also because the gods are exceedingly intolerant of his absence. When he does descend to earth, he seeks out the most tender and refined of human hearts, dwelling in the most generous and noble individuals, and there he takes up his abode for a brief space, diffusing in such spirits a sweetness, fleeting indeed, but of ineffable charm, and filling them with affections so noble, and with such wondrous virtue and

fortitude, that they then experience a condition hitherto unknown to the human race—the reality rather than the semblance of felicity. Sometimes, but very rarely, he unites two such hearts together, occupying them both simultaneously, and awakening in both mutual sentiments of the purest ardour and devotion. All who have tasted of his presence fervently implore him to bring about this condition in their favour, but Jove will not permit this, save in the rarest instances, inasmuch as the happiness engendered by such unions too closely approaches to that of the gods.

But even where such bliss is denied, the mere presence of this spirit in any human heart produces a condition which of itself transcends the greatest happiness ever experienced by men in the most favoured periods of the race. Where Love takes up its seat, there, unseen by all save the happy objects of its selection, hover all those potent and pleasing Phantasms which have been mentioned, which Jove had banished from the earth, but which this beneficent spirit brings back to comfort those whom he occupies. This is permitted by Jove; nor can it be prevented even by Truth herself, although she is most hostile to such illusions, and greatly resents their reappearance. But the Genii may not contend with the gods. And inasmuch as the Fates have endued this spirit with eternal youth, so, in accordance with this its nature, it brings to pass to a certain degree that old yearning of mankind to return to the conditions of their infancy, since in the hearts which it elects to occupy, and so long as it resides there, it reawakens and restores the infinite hopefulness and the beautiful and enchanting imaginations of our tenderest years.

Many mortals indeed, unacquainted with its delights, and

HERCULES AND ATLAS.

incapable of appreciating them, scorn and deride it with unbridled audacity, but it hears not their blasphemies, and, if it did, it would not seek to be avenged for them, so gentle and magnanimous is its nature. Moreover, the gods, satisfied with the penalties which they have inflicted on the human race at large, and with the irremediable misery which attends their lot, care not specially to chastise the offences of individual men; and therefore the unjust, and the unrighteous, and the contemnors of the gods, are visited with no other punishment than that which consists in exclusion from participation in the divine grace.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN HERCULES AND ATLAS.

HERCULES.

Ho, Father Atlas, Jove has sent me to present to you his compliments, and to say that in case you should be tired of sustaining that burden,¹ I should relieve you of it for an hour or two, as I did once before, I know not how many ages ago, while you take breath and enjoy a spell of repose.

ATLAS.

Thanks, my little Hercules, and thanks too to his majesty Jove. But the fact is, the world has of late become so absurdly light that this bit of a cloak, which I wear to protect me from the snow, is more of a burden to me than it is; and were it not the command of Jove that I should keep post here, and carry this little pellet on my shoulders, I should stick it under my arm-pit, or put it in my pocket,

¹ See Note 1.

or possibly hang it to a hair of my beard, and go about my own private affairs.

HERCULES.

How on earth has it grown so light? I do indeed perceive that its shape is somewhat changed, and that it now has the form of a baker's roll, instead of being round as it used to be when I was studying geography with the view of making that famous voyage with the Argonauts. But for all that I don't see why it should weigh any less than it used to.

ATLAS.

I don't know the reason, but as to the fact, as to the extraordinary lightness of the thing, you can satisfy yourself if you'll only take it in your hand for a moment and feel the weight of it.

HERCULES (*poising the globe on his palm*).

By my faith, which is the faith of Hercules, if I hadn't tried it I could never have believed it. But what's this other change I perceive in the thing? That other time when I carried it, it seemed to beat and throb on my back like the heart of an animal, and gave out a sort of buzzing sound like that of a wasp's nest. But now, as to the beating, it is as still as a watch that has broken its main-spring; and as to the buzzing, the devil a buzz do I hear.

ATLAS.

This, too, I cannot explain. All I know is that for a long while now the world has ceased to give any sign of sound or movement, and I have had a horrible suspicion

that it was dead, and have been expecting from day to day that it would poison me with the stench of its decomposition, and I have even been meditating where and how I should bury it, and what sort of epitaph I should put over its grave. Yet after a time, finding that it did not rot, I came to the conclusion that from being an animal as it originally was, it had turned into some sort of vegetable, like Daphne and so many others, and that this was the cause why it no longer stirred or breathed; and even now I half expect it will shortly be striking its suckers into my shoulders, and taking root there.

HERCULES.

As for me, I believe it is only asleep, and that this sleep is something like that of Epimenides,¹ which lasted half a century, or more. Or its case may possibly be like that of Hermotimus,² whose soul could leave his body at will, and live away from it for years at a time, wandering about and amusing itself, and then coming back when it pleased; until one fine day his friends, to put an end to these frolics, burned the body; and so when his soul next returned, it found its corporeal tenement destroyed, and saw that if it wished to have a place to live in, it would have to go and hire another, or else put up in an inn. But it were well to put an end to this sleep, lest some kind friend, thinking that the world is dead, should burn *it* too. So let us try some way to wake it up.

ATLAS.

All right. But how shall we set about it?

¹ See Note 2.

² See Note 3.

HERCULFS.

I should be inclined to fetch it a good crack with my club, only I'm half afraid I might smash it, or flatten it to a pancake; or possibly the crust of it, now that it has become so light, may have got so thin that it might crack like an egg under such a stroke. Moreover, I'm not sure but the human creatures on it, which in my youth had the courage to fight with lions, instead of with fleas as they now do, might suddenly faint away from the concussion. The best thing we can do is this: I'll lay aside my club, and you strip off your cloak, and let us have a game at ball with the wretched little globe. I'm only sorry I've not brought with me the gauntlets and racquets which Mercury and I use for playing at battledore and shuttlecock in the court-yard or the garden of Jove's house. However, I dare say we'll do very well with our fists.

ATLAS.

Not if I know it. What if your father, seeing us at it, should take it into his head to come and make a third in the game, and with his blazing thunderbolt hurl us both the Lord knows where, just as he pitched Phaeton into the Po!

HERCULES.

Not a bit. I'm not like Phaeton, the son of a mere poet, but I'm his own son. Ay, and if the poets peopled cities to the sound of the lyre, I am quite equal to unpeopling them to the music of my club. And as to the thunderbolt, with one kick I'd engage to send it flying to the furthest limits of the empyrean. Be assured that even if I took it into my head to take down five or six planets to play with, or

to seize a comet by the tail and use it as a sling for shooting stones at a mark, or even if I were to take the sun itself to play at quoits with, my worthy father would pretend not to see. Besides which, our idea in this game is to do good to the world, unlike Phaeton, who only wanted to show off his agility to the Hours who held the mounting-block for him when he was about to get into his chariot, and to pass for a good driver before Andromeda and Callisto, and other fair constellations, to whom, in his mad career, it is said he kept throwing bouquets of sun-rays and comfits of celestial light. In short, his only object was to make a grand display of himself in his excursion on that day, which, as you know, was a festival. So never you trouble yourself about the anger of my father; and in any case, I'll guarantee you from hurt, or engage to compensate you for any possible damage you may incur; so, off with your cape, and heave me the globe.

ATLAS.

It seems that, willy nilly, I must do as you bid me, since you are a stout fellow and well armed, while I am old and have no weapon. But whatever you do, see you don't let it fall, lest it get fresh dints, or a bit of it should get broken off or fractured, like that time when Sicily was torn off from Italy, and Africa from Spain; or lest so much as a splinter should fly off it, such as a province or a kingdom or so, since that might give rise to a war in the thing.

HERCULES.

Never you fear for me.

ATLAS.

Then here goes. Play! See how it wobbles by reason of the change in its shape!

HERCULES.

Come, heave a bit harder. Your serving hardly reaches me.

ATLAS.

I can't help it, heave as hard as I can. It's blowing south-west as usual here, and the confounded thing gets caught by the wind, it's so light.

HERCULES.

Av. that's its old trick. to fly off with every gust of wind.

ATLAS.

I verily believe the best thing we could do would be to inflate it a bit, since it won't bound to the hand any more than a melon.

HERCULES.

Say you so? That's a new defect; formerly it used to bounce and jump like any kid.

ATLAS.

Look out there—run—quick, I tell you! Look, by heaven, it's falling! Bad luck that you ever came.

HERCULES.

You hove it to me so awkwardly and so low that I couldn't have caught it in time, had I broken my neck in the attempt. Alas! poor little thing, how do you feel? Are you hurt anywhere? Not a breath is to be heard, and not a soul stirs on it—a sign that all are sound asleep as before.

HERCULES AND ATLAS.

ATLAS.

Leave it with me, by all the waters of the Styx, and I'll put it back on my shoulders ; and as for you, take up your club and go back to heaven as soon as ever you can, and make my excuses to Jove for this accident, which has happened entirely owing to you.

HERCULES.

Ay, I'll do so. For some centuries back there has been in my father's establishment a certain poet called Horace, who was created Court poet on the recommendation of Augustus, who again had been deified by Jove, out of consideration for the power of the Romans. This poet is perpetually chanting certain ditties of his, and more especially one in which he says that even if the world falls the just man remains unmoved. Well, it would seem that at the present day all men must be just, for the world has fallen, and not a soul has stirred.

ATLAS.

Who questions the justice of men? But don't stand here wasting time ; but hurry up as fast as you can, and make my excuses to your father ; otherwise I may expect at any moment a thunderbolt which may transform me from Atlas into Etna.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN FASHION AND DEATH.

FASHION.

Ho, Madam Death, Madam Death!

DEATH.

Wait till your hour comes, and I'll come to you without your calling me.

FASHION.

But, Madam Death—

DEATH.

Go to Beelzebub with you! I'll come, sure enough, when you don't want me.

FASHION.

Come to ME, indeed! As if I were not immortal.

DEATH.

Immortal, quotha! no no, as the poet says, a thousand years and more have passed since the times of the immortals ceased.

FASHION.

Madam seems to spout her Petrarch as if she were an Italian lyric poet of the fifteenth or eighteenth century.

DEATH.

Ay, I love the sonnets of Petrarch, for in them I find ample record of my triumphs, and they abound in mention of me. But again I say be so good as to be off,

FASHION.

Oh come; by the love you cherish for the seven cardinal sins, stop a moment and look on me.

DEATH.

I am looking at you.

FASHION.

And do you mean to say you don't know me?

DEATH.

You should know that my sight is bad, and that I can't use spectacles, since the English now make none that suit me, and if they did I have no nose to stick them on.

FASHION.

Why, I am Fashion, your own sister.

DEATH.

My sister!

FASHION.

Ay, don't you remember that we are both the children of Frailty?

DEATH.

What have I to do with remembering? I who am the sworn enemy of memory.

FASHION.

But I remember the circumstance well; and I also know that both of us are alike employed continually in the

destruction and change of all things here below, although you take one way of doing so, and I another.

DEATH.

Unless you are talking to yourself, or with some person you have there inside you, I beg you will raise your voice a little and articulate your words better, for if you go on muttering to me between your teeth like that with that voice like a spider's, I'll never hear you, since, as you know, my hearing is as bad as my sight.

FASHION.

Well, although it is not good manners to speak plainly, and though in France nobody speaks so as to be heard, yet since we are sisters and need not stand on ceremony with each other I'll speak as you wish. I say then that the tendency and operation common to us both is to be continually renewing the world; but whereas you have from the beginning aimed your efforts directly against the bodily constitutions and the lives of men, I am content to limit my operations to such things as their beards, their hair, their clothing, their furniture, their dwellings, and the like. Nevertheless, it is a fact that I have not failed at times to play men certain tricks not altogether unworthy to be compared to your own work; as, for example, boring men's ears, or lips, or noses, and lacerating them with the trinkets which I place therein; or scorching their bodies with hot irons which I persuade them to apply to their persons by way of improving their beauty. Then again, I sometimes squeeze the heads of their children with ligatures and other appliances, rendering it obligatory that all the inhabitants of a country should have heads of the same shape, as I have

ere now accomplished in America and Asia.¹ I also cripple mankind with shoes too small for their feet, and stifle their respiration, and make their eyes nearly start out of their heads with tightly-laced corsets, and many more follies of this kind. In short, I contrive to persuade the more ambitious of mortals daily to endure countless inconveniences, sometimes torture and mutilation, ay, and even death itself, for the love they bear towards me. I say nothing of the headaches, and colds, and catarrhs, and the fevers of all sorts, quotidian, tertian, and quartan, which men contract through their worship of me, inasmuch as they are willing to shiver with cold or stifle with heat at my command, adopting the most preposterous kinds of clothing to please me, and perpetrating a thousand follies in my name, regardless of the consequences to themselves.

DEATH.

By my faith, I begin to believe that you are my sister after all. Nay, it is as sure as death, and you have no need to produce the birth certificate of the parish priest in order to prove it. But standing still exhausts me, so if you've no objection I wish you would run on alongside of me; but see you don't break down, for I run at a great pace; and as we run, you can tell me what it is you want of me; and even if you would rather not keep me company, still, in consideration of your relationship to me, I promise you that when I die I'll leave you all my effects and residuary estate, and much good may it do you.

FASHION.

If we had to run a race together I don't know which of

¹ See Note 4.

us would win, for if you run fast, I positively gallop, and as for standing still in one place, if it exhausts you, it is bane to me. So let us be off, and as we run we'll talk over our affairs.

DEATH.

All right then ; and since you are my own mother's child, I hope it will suit you to assist me in my business.

FASHION.

I've already told you that I have heretofore done so more than you would suppose. First of all, though it is my nature for ever to annul and upset all other customs and usages, I have never and nowhere done anything calculated to put an end to the custom of dying ; and thus, as you see, it has prevailed universally from the beginning of time till now.

DEATH.

A precious marvel, forsooth, that you have abstained from doing that which it was not in your power to do !

FASHION.

Not in my power, quotha ! It is very evident that you have no idea of the power of Fashion.

DEATH.

Well, well, it'll be time enough to discuss this point when the custom of dying comes to an end. But in the meantime I want you, as a good and affectionate sister, to help me to prevent such a result, and to attain its very opposite, even more effectually and more expeditiously than I have yet done.

FASHION AND DEATH.

FASHION.

I have just told you some doings of mine which greatly promote your objects, but they are bagatelles compared to some which I will now mention. In order to help you I have of late gradually brought about among men the disuse of those manly toils and exercises which so greatly conduce to the well-being of the human frame, and have introduced in their stead many indulgences which are destructive of health and tend to shorten life. Moreover, I have brought into vogue such customs and habits that life itself, whether as regards the body or the mind, is more dead than alive, so much so that the present century may be truly described as the dead age. And whereas formerly you had no other possessions than graves and vaults, where you used to sow bones and dust in the dark, a sort of seed which produces no fruit, you now have dominions above ground, and subjects who, though they move to and fro on the surface of the earth, and have not yet been mowed down by you, are absolutely yours from their birth. And while formerly you used to be hated and reviled, now, by my agency, things have come to this, that men of intellect esteem and praise you, and prefer you to life, and invoke you and long for you as the thing of all others most to be desired.

Finally, I have observed that many men used to boast that they should be immortal, and should not utterly die, but that a part of them should escape your hands, though I well knew that this was mere folly, and that even if such persons might live in the memory of men, it would be a mere mockery of life, and that their so-called fame could yield them no sort of satisfaction while they were rotting in the grave. Nevertheless, knowing that this chatter about

immortality was an offence to you, and was derogatory to your reputation, I have abolished this folly of aiming at it, and have prevented the attainment of it, even in cases where it might seem to be deserved. So that now, when a man dies, you may rest assured that not a particle or atom of him escapes annihilation, and down he goes into the grave every bit of him, just as a little fish is swallowed at a mouthful, head and bones and all.

All these things, and they are not trifles, have I done and brought about for love of you, and from my desire to augment your sovereignty on earth. And I am resolved to continue my efforts to this end. It was for this reason that I came to seek you; and I have now to propose that for the future we should go hand in hand, and hunt in couples, so that we may at all times take counsel together as to the best measures to be adopted for the promotion of our common aims, and as to the most effectual mode of carrying them into execution.

DEATH.

A very sensible idea. By all means let us do as you propose.

OFFER OF PRIZES BY THE ACADEMY OF SYLLOGRAPHS.

THE Academy of Syllographs, ever mindful of the primary aim of its constitution, and having always at heart the promotion of the public good, has come to the conclusion that it could not more effectually conduce to this end than by aiding in the development of the distinguishing

tendencies of what an illustrious poet has characterised as the happy age in which we live.

For this reason it has diligently diagnosed the genius of the present time, and after prolonged and searching investigation it has arrived at the conviction that the present age ought to be characterised as pre-eminently the age of machines. And this not only because the men of to-day live and move more mechanically than did those of any former period, but also by reason of the infinite number of mechanical contrivances continually being invented, and daily being applied to so many various purposes, that nowadays it may almost be said that human affairs and all the operations of life are governed and regulated, not by men at all, but by machines.

This feature of the age is hailed by the Academy with peculiar satisfaction, not only in view of the manifest general convenience which flows from it, but also for two special reasons of a most important character, though not generally recognised by society. In the first place, the Academy feels confident that in course of time the agency of mechanism may be so extended as to embrace not only the material but the moral world; and that, just as mechanical inventions now protect us from lightning and other atmospherical disturbances, so, in time, some sort of apparatus may be invented calculated to shield us from envy, calumny, perfidy, and fraud; some species of moral lightning-conductors, so to speak, which may protect us from the effects of egotism, from the dominion of mediocrity, from the arrogance of bloated imbecility, from the ribaldry of the base, from the cynical pessimism of pedants, from the indifferentism engendered by over-culture, and from numerous other such-like inconveniences, which of late have become as difficult to ward off

as formerly were the lightnings and storms of the physical world.

The next consideration just referred to is this ; and it is one of paramount importance. It is well known that philosophers have come to despair of remedying the manifold defects of humanity, and are convinced that it would be more difficult to amend these than it would be to recast things on an entirely fresh basis, and to substitute an entirely fresh agency as the motive power of life. The Academy of Syllographs, concurring in this opinion, hold that it would be in the highest degree expedient that men should retire as far as possible from the conduct of the business of the world, and should gradually give place to mechanical agency for the direction of human affairs. Accordingly, resolved to contribute as far as lies in its power to this consummation, it has determined to offer three prizes to be awarded to the persons who shall invent the best examples of the three machines now to be described.

The scope and object of the first of these automata shall be to represent the person and discharge the functions of a friend who shall not calumniate or jeer at his absent associate ; who shall not fail to take his part when he hears him censured or ridiculed ; who shall not prefer a reputation for wit, and the applause of men, to his duty to friendship ; who shall never, from love of gossip or mere ostentation of superior knowledge, divulge a secret committed to his keeping ; who shall not abuse the intimacy or confidence of his fellow in order to supplant or surpass him ; who shall harbour no envy against his friend ; who shall guard his interests and help to repair his losses, and shall be prompt to answer his call, and minister to his needs more substantially than by empty professions.

• In the construction of this piece of mechanism it will be well to study, among other things, the treatise on friendship by Cicerò, as well as that of Madame de Lambert. The Academy is of opinion that the manufacture of such a machine ought not to prove impracticable or even particularly difficult, for, besides the automata of Regiomontanus and Vaucanson,¹ there was at one time exhibited in London a mechanical figure which drew portraits, and wrote to dictation; while there have been more than one example of such machines capable of playing at chess. Now, in the opinion of many philosophers human life is but a game; nay, some hold that it is more shallow and more frivolous than many other games, and that the principles of chess, for example, are more in accordance with reason, and that its various moves are more governed by wisdom, than are the actions of mankind; while we have it on the authority of Pindar that human action is no more substantial than the shadow of a dream; and this being so, the intelligence of an automaton ought to prove quite equal to the discharge of the functions which have just been described.

As to the power of speech, it seems unreasonable to doubt that men should have the power of communicating it to machines constructed by themselves, seeing that this may be said to have been established by sundry precedents, such, for example, as in the case of the statue of Memnon, and of the human head manufactured by Albertus Magnus, which actually became so loquacious that Saint Thomas Aquinas, losing all patience with it, smashed it to pieces. Then, too, there was the instance of the parrot of Nevers,² though *it* was a living creature; but if it could be taught to converse reasonably, how much more may it be supposed

¹ See Note 5.

² See Note 6.

that a machine devised by the mind of man, and constructed by his hands, should do as much; while it would have this advantage that it might be made less garrulous than the parrot of Nevers or the head of Albertus, and therefore it need not irritate its acquaintances and provoke them to smash it.

The inventor of the best example of such a machine shall be decorated with a gold medallion of four hundred zecchins in weight, bearing on its face the images of Pylades and Orestes, and on the reverse the name of the successful competitor, surrounded by the legend, **FIRST REALISER OF THE FABLES OF ANTIQUITY.**

The second machine called for by the Academy is to be an artificial steam man, so constructed and regulated as to perform virtuous and magnanimous actions. The Academy is of opinion that in the absence of all other adequate motive power to that end, the properties of steam might prove effective to inspire an automaton, and direct it to the attainment of virtue and true glory. The inventor who shall undertake the construction of such a machine should study the poets and the writers of romance, who will best guide him as to the qualities and functions most essential to such a piece of mechanism. The prize shall be a gold medal weighing four hundred and fifty zecchins, bearing on its obverse a figure symbolical of the golden age, and on its reverse the name of the inventor, with the following inscription borrowed from the fourth eclogue of Virgil—

“QUO FERREA PRIMUM
DESINET AC TOTO SURGET GENUS AUREA MUNDO.”

The third automaton should be so constituted as to perform the duties of woman such as she was conceived by

the Count Baldassar Castiglione,¹ and described by him in his treatise entitled *The Courtier*, as well as by other writers in other works on the subject, which will be readily found, and which, as well as that of the Count, will have to be carefully consulted and followed. The construction of a machine of this nature, too, ought not to appear impossible to the inventors of our time, when they reflect on the fact that in the most ancient times, and times destitute of science, Pygmalion was able to fabricate for himself with his own hands, a wife of such rare gifts that she has never since been equalled down to the present day. The successful inventor of this machine shall be rewarded with a gold medal weighing five hundred zecchins, bearing on one face the figure of the Arabian Phoenix of Metastasio, couched on a tree of a European species, while its other side will bear the name of the inventor, with the title, INVENTOR OF FAITHFUL WOMEN AND OF CONJUGAL HAPPINESS.

Finally, the Academy has resolved that the funds necessary to defray the expenses incidental to this competition shall be supplemented by all that was found in the purse of Diogenes, its first secretary, together with one of the three golden asses which were the property of three of its former members—namely, Apuleius, Firenzuola, and Macchiavelli,² but which came into the possession of the Academy by the last wills and testaments of the aforementioned, as duly recorded in its minutes.

¹ See Note 7.

² See Note 8.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A GOBLIN AND A
GNOME.¹

GOBLIN.

What, you here, son of Sabazius?² Whither bound?

GNOME.

My father has sent me to try and find out what the devil these fogues of men are plotting now. He shrewdly suspects they are brewing some mischief, because for a long time now they have been strangely quiet, and not one of them is ever to be seen now in his subterranean realm. He doubts they are contriving some design against him, unless they have relapsed into their primitive custom of using sheep and cattle, instead of gold and silver, as the medium of exchange; or possibly civilised people are now satisfied with bills and notes in place of money, as they used to be, or with glass beads, like savages; or perhaps even the laws of Lycurgus may have been restored, though he thinks this last contingency in the highest degree improbable.

GOBLIN.

You look for them in vain; they are all dead, to quote the closing words of a tragedy in which all the characters came to a violent end.

GNOME.

What on earth do you mean to imply?

¹ See Note 9.

² See Note 10.

GOBLIN.

I mean to imply that all men are dead, and that the race is extinct.

GNOME.

Nonsense. Such a thing as this would surely have been mentioned in the papers; and I have heard of no notice of the fact.

GOBLIN.

Papers, indeed! Are you such a fool as not to see that now that men are all dead, no more papers are published?

GNOME.

Ay, true enough; but now how ever shall we hear the news of the world?

GOBLIN.

What news can there be to hear now? That the sun has risen or set; that it is hot or cold; that here or there it has rained or snowed or blown hard? Now, all men being dead, Fortune has taken the bandage from her eyes, and put on a pair of spectacles, and tied her wheel to a door-post, and sits with her arms crossed looking on at the affairs of the world without taking any part in them. For now there are no more kingdoms or empires to inflate themselves and then burst like soap-bubbles. They have all evaporated, and there are no more wars, and now each year is as like its predecessor as one egg is to another.

GNOME.

But now we'll never be able to know the day of the month, for no more almanacs will be printed.

GOBLIN.

And what does that matter? The moon will not on that account fail to pursue her course.

GNOME.

But the days of the week will have no names now.

GOBLIN.

What! Do you think they won't come round as usual unless you call to them by their names; or do you perhaps fancy that, once they have passed, you could make them come back by calling to them?

GNOME.

But we'll never be able to keep count of the years.

GOBLIN.

In that case we'll be able to pass ourselves off as young fellows long after we've ceased to be so. Moreover, when past time can no longer be measured, we'll give ourselves less concern about it, and when we are quite old we'll not keep expecting death from day to day.

GNOME.

But how on earth did the rascals come to an end?

GOBLIN.

Partly through their incessant wars with each other; partly by getting drowned in their constant restless navigations and voyages; some by eating each other up; others—and these not a few—by suicide; others mouldered away

in sheer inaction, or wore out their brains by poring over books, or perished through gluttony and a thousand other excesses. In a word, they came to an end by doing everything in their power to outrage nature, and to compass their own destruction.

GNOME.

Well, for all you may say, I can't comprehend how a whole race of animals could come to total extinction in this strange way.

GOBLIN.

I should have thought that a practical geologist like you would have known that there is nothing uncommon in this; and that numerous genera of living creatures which formerly existed on earth are no longer found there; and that no trace of them now remains beyond a few petrified fossils; and this notwithstanding the fact that those poor creatures resorted to none of the endless devices which, as I have told you, men employed for the purpose of attaining to perdition.

GNOME.

Well, well, I suppose you're right; but I must say I do wish one or two of the vermin could come to life again, were it only that we might see what they thought when they found that in spite of the extinction of the human race, everything else continued to go on just as before in a world which they always imagined had been created and maintained for them alone.

GOBLIN.

Ay, they never could comprehend that it was in reality created and maintained for the goblins.

A GOBLIN AND A GNOME.

43

GNOME.

Allow me to observe that you're talking nonsense; if, indeed, you're talking seriously.

GOBLIN.

What do you mean? Of course I'm talking seriously.

GNOME.

Get along with you, my little joker. Why, every school-boy knows that the world was made expressly for the gnomes.

GOBLIN.

For the gnomes, indeed! For the gnomes who live perpetually under ground! Well, that is a joke. What good do the gnomes get from the sun, the moon, the air, the sea, and the plains?

GNOME.

And I'd like to know what good the goblins get from the mines of gold and silver, and all the rest of the contents of the earth beyond its outer crust?

GOBLIN.

Well, well, whether they do or not, let us not dispute this point, since sure am I that even the very lizards and gnats fancy that the whole world was created expressly for them. So let every creature stick to its own opinion, for nobody is likely to knock it out of its head. Only, for my part, I tell you plainly that if I had not been born a goblin, I should break my heart.

GNOME.

And so should I, if I had not been born a gnome. But I should like to know what men could now have to say for their presumption, since, besides many other proofs of it, they used to poke their hands, and drive their shafts, into the bosom of the earth, and violently rob us of our own property, asserting that it was the appanage of the human race, forsooth; and that Nature had hidden it away down there by way of a practical joke, just to see if they should be able to find it out and dig it up.

GOBLIN.

Just like them. Why, they had the audacity to think not only that everything on the earth existed for their use and benefit alone, but also that all created things were but a bagatelle in comparison with them. The petty vicissitudes in their affairs they used to call revolutions in the universe; and they entitled the histories of their peoples and nations as the histories of the world, forsooth, although even on the surface of the earth there are as many other species of animals, let alone insects, as there were individuals among men; and yet all these animals, which they supposed to have been created solely and expressly for their use, never were so much as aware that the world underwent these so-called revolutions.

GNOME.

Did they assert that gnats and fleas, too, were created for their benefit?

GOBLIN.

Ay; just to exercise them in patience, they used to say.

GNOME.

As if, tailing fleas, they would have had nothing to try their patience !

GOBLIN.

Then again, one of them, called Chrysippus, had the hardihood to say that swine were nothing but bundles of flesh prepared by Nature for the use of men, and furnished with life only as a sort of condiment, like salt, to keep them from going bad.¹

GNOME.

I should say that if the said Chrysippus had only had a pinch of salt in his precious brain, instead of such a lively imagination, he would not have talked such nonsense.

GOBLIN.

And here's another delicious idea. There are infinite numbers of species of living creatures which have never been seen by their so-called and self-styled masters, men, and whose very existence was unknown to them, either by reason of these creatures living in situations where man never set foot, or because they are so minute that they cannot be seen by the naked eye. Thousands of other species have only been discovered in quite recent times. The very same thing may be said as to the vegetable kingdom. Nor is this all, for when after many ages by the invention and gradual improvement of what they called their telescopes, they became aware of the existence of a few stars and planets, of whose presence in the universe they had till then during thousands of years been totally ignorant, they

¹ See Note II.

immediately entered them in the catalogue of their goods and chattels, imagining that the heavenly bodies were nothing more than a sort of candles or lanterns stuck up there for their use, and to give light to their lordships, since, forsooth, they must needs busy themselves even during the night.

GNOME.

Ay, just so; and similarly, during summer, when they saw those meteors which occasionally shoot across the sky at night, I suppose they would say that they were spirits going about to snuff the star-candles for the convenience of men.

GOBLIN.

Exactly. But now that they themselves are extinct, the universe seems to feel no difference, and no want of them; the rivers still continue to flow as usual; and as to the sea, although it no longer has to serve for their navigation and commerce, strange to say, it shows no signs of drying up.

GNOME.

And the stars and the planets still continue to rise and set, and have not gone into mourning

GOBLIN.

Neither has the sun daubed his face with rust, as it did, according to Virgil, on account of the death of Cæsar; as to which matter, for my part, I don't believe it cared a jot more than it did for the statue of Pompey.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN MALAMBRUNO AND
FARFARELLO.

MALAMBRUNO.

Spirits of the abyss, Farfarello, Ciriatto, Baconero, Ash-taroth, Alfchino, or however ye be called, I conjure ye in the name of Beelzebub, and command ye by virtue of mine art, which can unhinge the moon, and nail the sun in the midst of heaven, let one of ye come, with free mandate from your prince, and plenary power to employ all the forces of Hell in my service.

FARFARELLO.

Lo, I am here.

MALAMBRUNO.

Who art thou?

FARFARELLO.

I am Farfarello, at thy service.

MALAMBRUNO.

Bring'st thou the power of Beelzebub?

FARFARELLO.

I do; and I can do for thee whatever my king himself could do; and more than all other created beings could by their united powers perform.

MALAMBRUNO.

'Tis well. Thou must content me in one desire.

48 *MALAMBRUNO AND FARFARELLO.*

FARFARELLO.

Thou shalt be duly served. What is thy wish? Glory transcending that of the sons of Atreus?

MALAMBRUNO.

No.

FARFARELLO.

Wealth surpassing that contained in the city of Manoa,¹ when it shall be discovered.

MALAMBRUNO.

No.

FARFARELLO.

An empire vast as that which men say Charles the Fifth once dreamed of?

MALAMBRUNO.

No.

FARFARELLO.

Shall I bend to your will a woman more obstinate than Penelope?

MALAMBRUNO.

No. Think you that for this it is needful to apply to the Devil?

FARFARELLO.

Would'st thou have honours and prosperity equal to thine own profligacy?

¹ See Note 12.

MALAMBRUNO AND FARFARELL

MALAMBRUNO.

Metjinks I should be more likely to invoke the devil if I wished the contrary.

FARFARELLO.

Then, in a word, what would'st thou have?

MALAMBRUNO.

Make me happy for a single instant.

FARFARELLO.

That I cannot do.

MALAMBRUNO.

How, sirrah, why not?

FARFARELLO.

I swear, on my conscience, it is not in my power.

MALAMBRUNO.

On the conscience of a good demon?

FARFARELLO.

Ay, surely; and there be good demons as well as good men.

MALAMBRUNO.

But I would have thee to know that if thou dost not obey me on the spot, without further parley about it, I'll trice thee up by the tail to one of these rafters.

FARFARELLO.

It would be easier for thee to kill me than for me to grant thee what thou hast asked.

50. *MALAMBRUNO AND FARFARELLO.*

MALAMBRUNO.

Then go thou back to hell, with a murrain to thee; and bid Beelzebub come hither to me in person.

FARFARELLO.

Even if Beelzebub were to come, with all the inhabitants of the pits of hell and the Giudecca¹ at his back, he could not make thee happy, no, nor any one of thy race, any more than I can.

MALAMBRUNO.

What! not even for a single instant?

FARFARELLO.

It is just as impossible to make thee happy for a moment, or half a moment, or the thousandth part of a moment, as it would be to make thee so for thy whole life.

MALAMBRUNO.

Well, if thou canst not possibly make me happy, surely thou canst at least liberate me from misery.

FARFARELLO.

Ay, on condition that thou cease to love thyself beyond all other things.

MALAMBRUNO.

That I can never do whilst I live.

FARFARELLO.

Truly, while life endures, no creature can do so; and the

¹ See Note 13.

MALAMBRUNO AND FARFARELLO. 51

ature of man, more especially, is such that he could do nothing more easily than that.

MALAMBRUNO.

'Tis even so.

FARFARELLO.

Well then, since thou lovest thyself with all the love of which thou art capable, it necessarily follows that thou must crave for happiness beyond all things. But inasmuch as this supreme craving can never here be satisfied, it allows again that thou must ever be unhappy.

MALAMBRUNO.

Ay, even while I seem to taste of that which passes for pleasure; since no pleasure yields me happiness or satisfaction.

FARFARELLO.

Of a truth, not one can do so.

MALAMBRUNO.

Then, if no pleasure can satisfy the craving for happiness which is ingrained in my nature, pleasure itself is a delusion, and even while it endures, I must continue to be unhappy.

FARFARELLO.

Thou must indeed; for in man, and in all other creatures, even when actual pain and suffering are not present, the absence of happiness amounts to positive misery; and this so even in the midst of what men call pleasure.

MALAMBRUNO.

So then, from the hour of our birth to that of our death, our unhappiness cannot cease; not for the space of a single moment?

FARFARELLO.

Nay, it ceases, or is at least suspended, while you sleep without dreaming; or if you be overtaken by a fainting fit, or by aught else which suspends sensation.

MALAMBRUNO.

But never while we are conscious of our existence?

FARFARELLO.

Never.

MALAMBRUNO.

In that case death must be preferable to life.

FARFARELLO.

Assuredly, if the cessation of unhappiness be preferable to its continuance.

MALAMBRUNO.

Well?

FARFARELLO.

Well, this being so, if you feel disposed to surrender your soul to me before your time comes, I'll be happy to take it away now.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN NATURE AND A SOUL.

NATURE.

Go now, my favourite daughter, for such thou shalt be called for a long series of ages—go, live, and be great and miserable.

SOUL.

What sin have I committed prior to my birth that you doom me to such a punishment?

NATURE.

What punishment, my child?

SOUL.

Have you not doomed me to be unhappy?

NATURE.

Ay; for I have destined thee to be great, and thou can'st not be that without being unhappy. Moreover, thou art appointed to animate a human form, and all men of necessity are from their birth unhappy.

SOUL.

Instead of this being so, it were but reasonable that you should provide that they should of necessity be happy; and if this be beyond your power, surely you ought at least to refrain from placing them in the world.

NATURE.

Neither of these courses is within my power, for I myself

am subject to Destiny, who hath ordained it otherwise, whatever the reason for this may be, and neither you nor I can penetrate it. Now, seeing that you have been created and destined to occupy a human body, no power existing either in me or in any other being can possibly deliver you from the unhappiness appointed to men. Nay, in addition to that unhappiness, it will be necessary for you to endure a special and still greater measure of misery, peculiar to yourself by reason of the very nobility and excellence with which I have endowed you.

SOUL.

Having just come into existence, of course I have all things to learn, and this probably is the reason why I fail to understand you. But tell me, are nobility of disposition and extraordinary unhappiness substantially the same thing; and if not, could you not contrive to separate them?

NATURE.

In the case of mankind, and indeed to a certain extent in that of all animals, it may be said that these two things are practically one and the same, since the more elevated the faculties are, the more clear becomes the perception of the conditions of life, and of the unhappiness inseparable from existence; and thus that unhappiness itself becomes intensified. At the same time increased vividness of perception tends to enlarge the scope of self-love, and to increase the craving for happiness, resulting only in increased regret for the impossibility of attaining it, and greater intolerance of the inevitable woes of life. All this was from the beginning involved in the primeval and eternal constitution of created things, which it is beyond my power to change.

But furthermore, the very keenness of your intellect, coupled with the vividness of your imagination, will tend to diminish to a great degree your command over your emotions. The lower animals readily apply their faculties and powers to the accomplishment of the ends which they have in view; but men seldom put forth their full and unrestricted capacities on any occasion, since their powers of action are usually more or less impeded by the influence of their reason and their imagination, which introduce a thousand doubts into their deliberations, and raise up a thousand obstacles to the execution of their designs. Indeed, those of them who are the least capable of weighing their thoughts and analysing their intentions, or who are the least addicted to this habit, are generally found to be the most prompt in their decisions, and the most direct in their operations; whereas beings like you, perpetually involved in introspection, and hampered by the very magnitude of their powers, are comparatively impotent for practical purposes, and are too often a prey to irresolution in thought and deed, that most baneful of all the mischiefs which can affect the transactions of life.

Add to this, that while by the superiority of your faculties you will easily and swiftly surpass your fellow-creatures in profound knowledge and difficult attainments, nevertheless you will frequently find it almost impossible to put into practice numerous things, trifling in appearance, but most necessary to the business of life; and at the same time you will see these things accomplished without difficulty and practised with ease by persons far inferior to yourself, if not actually contemptible in their character. These and other infinite difficulties and mortifications await on and environ great souls. Yet they are abundantly compensated for these trials by fame, by the praises and honours which

are won for these noble spirits by their greatness, and by the enduring memory which they leave behind to posterity.

SOUL.

But who will accord to me the praises and honours of which you speak? Will they be rendered to me by Heaven, or by you, or by whom?

NATURE.

They will be rendered to you by men, since they alone can confer them.

SOUL.

But I pray you to consider. It occurs to me that since I shall be unable to perform actions so necessary to the conduct of human affairs, and which yet are capable, as you say, of accomplishment by the poorest intelligences, the result must be that instead of being praised and honoured, I shall inevitably be reprobated and shunned by men, or at least shall have to pass through life almost unknown to them, as one ill fitted for human society.

NATURE.

To me it is not given to read with absolute exactness, or to predict infallibly. I may think or do in relation to you during your sojourn on earth. But from the experience of the past, I shall judge it to be most probable that they will pursue you with envy, the usual fate of noble souls, or vex you with contumely or neglect. Besides which, Fortune herself, and even ordinary chance, are wont to be hostile to such as you.

Nevertheless, immediately after your death, as happened

to one called Camoens, or at most a few years later, as occurred in the case of another named Milton, you will be praised and exalted to the skies, I will not say by all men, but at least by that small portion of them who are possessed of judgment and discrimination; and possibly the mortal remains of the person in whom you dwelt when on earth will repose in a sumptuous tomb, and his features, imitated in various costly materials, be preserved among men; while all the incidents of his life will be described by many writers, and their memory be diligently preserved, till at last the whole civilised world shall ring with his renown. All this will probably happen, unless by the malignity of fortune, or by reason of the very excess of your gifts, you should be hindered from exhibiting to mankind any due proof of your worth, as indeed has happened in many cases, known only to me and to Fate.

SOUL.

Oh! mother, although I am as yet destitute of all other knowledge, nevertheless I know and feel that the strongest desire you have implanted in me, indeed the only one of which I am conscious, is the desire of happiness. And even granting that I may be capable of desiring glory, and whether that be a good or an evil, assuredly I could never desire it if it does not ensure happiness, or is not at least conducive to its attainment. Now, according to what you have said, the qualities with which you have endowed me may possibly be necessary or serviceable for the attainment of glory, but it is evident that they do not lead to happiness, but on the contrary to misery. Furthermore, it appears that these qualities will not lead me even to glory until I shall be dead; and when I am dead, what benefit or what pleasure can possibly accrue to me even from the greatest

advantages earth can bestow? Finally, you yourself admit that this phantom glory, which can only be purchased at the price of so much misery, may never be attained by me at all, not even after death. These things being so, and judging from your own words, I am forced to the conclusion that instead of loving me tenderly, as you professed in your opening address, you in reality hate me even more malignantly than mankind and Fortune herself are likely to be capable of doing during my sojourn on earth, since you have not scrupled to present to me a gift so fatal as this nobility of character for which you take so much credit to yourself, but which is itself calculated to prove so effectual an obstacle to my attainment of my sole desire—happiness.

NATURE.

My child, every soul of man, as I have already told you, is doomed to infelicity, in spite of me; but in the universal unhappiness which is the inevitable lot of men, and in the infinite vanity of all their pleasures and hopes, glory has ever been regarded by them as the greatest good which is conceded to mortals, and the most worthy object of their efforts; and therefore, not from hatred of you, but from a sincere and special good will and benevolence, I resolved to endow you with all the qualities in my power to bestow, for the attainment of that end.

SOUL.

Tell me—of all the inferior creatures which you mentioned is there any one furnished with less perfection of vitality, and less capacity for feeling than man?

NATURE.

Surely. From the plants upwards all creatures are in

this respect more or less inferior to man, who is gifted with a greater exuberance of life and feeling than any other created thing, inasmuch as he is the most perfect of all earthly creatures.

SOUL.

Well then, if you truly love me, lodge me in the most imperfect of them all; or if you cannot do this, at least strip me of those fatal gifts which you fancy ennoble me, and adapt me to occupy the most stupid and insensate human creature you have ever fashioned.

NATURE.

This it is in my power to grant; and I am willing to do so, since you reject the immortality for which I had destined you.

SOUL.

And instead of immortality, I beseech you to send me death as soon as possible.

NATURE.

On that point I will consult Destiny.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE EARTH AND THE MOON.

EARTH.

My dear Moon, I know you can talk, and answer questions, since you are a person, as I have often heard from the poets; besides which our children say you have

really got a mouth and nose and eyes, just like any one of themselves, and that they can see this with their own eyes, which at their time of life indeed are pretty sharp. As for me, I doubt not you know that I too am no less a person; so much so indeed that when I was younger I had plenty of children of my own; and so you won't be surprised to hear me talk.

Well then, my sweet Moon, though I have been so close to you for so many ages that I can't remember their number, I have never yet addressed a word to you till now, because my own affairs have hitherto so occupied me that I have never before found time for a chat. But now that my business is so reduced that it can take care of itself, I don't know what to do with myself, and am fairly bursting with *ennui*. Therefore I propose in future often to talk to you, and to take much interest in your affairs; that is to say, provided I shall not thereby be troublesome to you.

MOON.

Have no anxiety on that score. I would I were as certain that fortune would ensue me against all other inconveniences, as I am certain that *you* will not cause me any. If you want to talk to me, talk away at your pleasure, for although I am a lover of silence, as I think you know, yet to oblige you, I am willing to listen to you, and even to answer your questions.

EARTH.

Well then, to begin. Do you hear the delicious harmony which the heavenly bodies produce by their revolutions?

MOON.

To tell you the truth, I hear nothing.

EARTH.

Well, for the matter of that, no more do I, unless it be the roar of the wind as it rushes from my poles to the equator, or from the equator to the poles, and there's not much music in that. But Pythagoras asserts that the celestial spheres create a certain wonderfully sweet sound, and that you yourself contribute to it, and actually form the eighth chord of the universal lyre; but he adds that I am deafened by the sound of it, and therefore don't hear it.

MOON.

Then, of a surety, I too must be deafened by it, for as I said just now, I don't hear it; and I don't feel like being a chord.

EARTH.

Well, let us change the subject. Tell me, are you really inhabited, as has been alleged and sworn to by a thousand philosophers, ancient and modern, from Orpheus down to De la Lande? As for me, no matter how I try to stretch these horns of mine which men call mountain peaks, and from which I stare at you, just like a snail with extended horns, yet I never can make out a single inhabitant on you; though I have heard that one David Fabricius,¹ whose eyesight was sharper even than that of Lynceus,² once saw some of them spreading their linen out in the sun to dry.

¹ See Note 14.

² See Note 15.

MOON.

As to your horns, as you call them, I know nothing about them ; but the fact is, I *am* inhabited.

EARTH.

Ay, and what colour are your men ?

MOON.

Men ! What men ?

EARTH.

Those who live on you, of course. Don't you say you're inhabited ?

MOON.

Well, so I am—but what of that ?

EARTH.

Well, I presume not *all* your inhabitants are brutes ?

MOON.

Neither brutes nor men. As to the matter of that, I don't even know of creatures brutes or men may be ; and I may tell you that I have not understood a syllable of the things you have just been saying to me, about these men I presume.

EARTH.

Then what sort of creatures are these inhabitants of yours ?

MOON.

They are of many and various sorts, all of them unknown to you as yours are to me.

EARTH.

This strikes me as so strange that had I not heard it from your own lips, I should never have believed it possible. Were you ever conquered by any of your inhabitants?

MOON.

Not to my knowledge. Conquered! How do you mean, and why?

EARTH.

Well, for ambition or cupidity; and by means of political arts or force of arms.

MOON.

I don't know what you mean by arms, or ambition, or political arts; in fact, I don't know what you're talking about.

EARTH.

Nay, surely, if you don't know what arms are, you assuredly know what war is, for not long ago, a certain philosopher down here, by means of certain instruments called telescopes, which enable people to see a great distance, plainly saw up there on you a first-class fortress with tall bastions; a thing which proves that your people are accustomed at least to sieges and mural combats.

MOON.

Pardon me, Madam Earth, if I reply to you a trifle more freely than is perhaps becoming in one who, like me, is only your vassal and handmaiden. But I really must say you appear to me something more than over-vain in supposing that all things in all parts of creation must be similar to what prevails in your limits, as if Nature had no other idea except to copy *you* exactly in all her operations. When I tell you that I am inhabited, straightway you must jump to the conclusion that my inhabitants must be men. Then, when I tell you that they are not so, and when you seem to realise that they may possibly be creatures of some other species, you immediately assume that they must have the same properties and must live under the same conditions as your people, and begin to tell me about telescopes, and philosophers, and what not. But if these telescopes don't enable you to examine other things more accurately than it seems they do in my case, then I suspect their accuracy is on a par with that of the children down there on you who, as you have just said, discover in me a mouth and nose and eyes, which I have no knowledge of possessing.

EARTH.

I suppose you'll tell me next that it is not true that your provinces are provided with fine broad roads, or that you are cultivated, although these things can be plainly seen from Germany with the help of a telescope.¹

MOON.

If I am cultivated, I am not conscious of the fact; and

¹ See Note 16.

as to the alleged roads on my surface, they are invisible to me.

EARTH.

My dear Moon, I would have you to know that I am rather uneducated and something dull in the understanding, and so it is no wonder if men easily impose on me. But nevertheless I am in a position to tell you that though, as you say, your own inhabitants have never evinced a desire to conquer you, still you have not always been quite free from dangers of this kind; since at various times various people down here have cherished schemes of conquering you themselves, and have even proceeded far in their preparations to that end. And truly they might have succeeded in their attempts, were it not that although they ascended to the highest points on my surface, and stood on their tiptoes, and stretched out their arms as far as ever they could, they somehow never managed to reach you. Besides this, for some years past I have observed that my people have been carefully surveying every part of you, and drawing up maps of your various countries. They have also measured the heights of your mountains, and they know the names of them all. Well, for the good will I bear you, I have thought it only right to tell you of these things, in order that you may be prepared for all possible contingencies.

But now to come to some other matters which I want to ask you. How ever do you stand the incessant baying of our dogs at you? What is your opinion of those people who show you to their friends in a well? Are you feminine or masculine? for in former times opinions were much divided on this point.¹ Is it a fact that the Arcadians

¹ See Note 17.

existed before you were made?¹ Is it true that the women on you, or whatever your female inhabitants ought to be called, are oviparous, and that an egg of one of them actually fell down here once upon a time, I know not when?² Is it the case that you are perforated just like the bead of a rosary, as is maintained by a modern philosopher; or that you are made of green cheese, as certain Englishmen affirm? Are we to believe that one day, or it may have been one night, Mahomed sliced you in two through the middle like a water melon, and that a good large piece of you slipped up his sleeve? And finally, why do you like to hang on the tops of minarets, and what are your views as to the feast of Bairam?

MOON.

Perhaps you will be good enough to ask me a few more questions, for while you run on like this I have no need to answer you, and can comfortably maintain my wonted silence. If it pleases you to indulge in chatter like this, and can find nothing more sensible to talk about, then, instead of addressing yourself to me, who don't know what you mean, I would recommend you to get your inhabitants to manufacture for you a brand-new satellite which shall revolve round you, and which shall be composed and peopled after your own notions. Apparently you can talk of nothing but men, and dogs, and other things of which I know no more than I do of that stupendous sun round which it is said our own sun rotates.

EARTH.

I confess that the more I resolve, in my conversation

¹ See Note 18.

² See Note 19.

with you, to avoid topics specially connected with myself, the less do I succeed in doing so. But I shall be still more careful in future. So now, is it you who amuse yourself by alternately raising and depressing the water in my oceans?

MOON.

Possibly it may be so, but whether I do that, or produce any other effects on you, I am no more conscious of the fact than you probably are of the many effects which you produce on me; and you may imagine that they must exceed those of me on you in proportion as you excel me in size and power.

EARTH.

As to any effects that I may produce on you, I am not aware of any except that from time to time I intercept from you the light of the sun, and your own from myself; and also that while it is night with you, I shine very brightly on you, as indeed I myself occasionally perceive. But I was nearly forgetting a point which interests me above all others. I should like to know if Ariosto is right where he declares that all the properties which men are continually losing, such as youth, beauty, health, and the like, as well as all the efforts which they expend in the pursuit of earthly renown, in the education of their children, and in the promotion of so-called useful objects; I say I should like to know if it is true that all these things evaporate in your direction, and are eventually piled up in you as in a lumber-room, so that all human things are to be found there, except indeed folly, which never departs from men. If this be so, I reckon that by this time you must be pretty well crammed, and must have very little spare room left;

the more so, seeing that of late men have been parting with an unusual number of things, such as patriotism, virtue, magnanimity, and rectitude; and this not only partially or exceptionally, as used to be the case, but universally and totally. At all events, if these things have not flown away to you, I don't know where else they can be. Well, I would propose that we enter into a convention, by the terms of which you shall agree to return these things to me, either at once or by degrees. I judge it likely that you would be glad to be rid of them, especially of common sense, which, I hear, takes up a great deal of space on your globe. On the other hand, I for my part will cause my inhabitants to pay you a good round sum annually for this accommodation.

MOON.

Still harping on those blessed men! For all you have said as to folly never leaving your confines, you are like to drive *me* mad, and rob me of my own share of common sense in your search for that of men, as to which I have no sort of idea where it is, or whether it still exists in any corner of the universe. The only thing I do know about it is that it is not to be found up here; no, nor any of the other things you ask me for.

EARTH.

Well then, at least tell me if your inhabitants are acquainted with vices, misdeeds, misfortunes, pain, old age, and, in a word, all ills. I presume you know the meaning of these names.

MOON.

Oh, I know them well; and not only the names, but

the things which they mean. Too well do I know them, for I am filled quite full with them, instead of with the other things you mentioned just now.

EARTH.

Which most abound among your inhabitants, virtues or vices?

MOON.

Vices, by a very long way indeed.

EARTH.

And with you which generally predominates, good or evil?

MOON.

Evil, beyond all comparison.

EARTH.

And, generally speaking, are your inhabitants happy or unhappy?

MOON.

So unhappy that I would not change places with the most fortunate of them.

EARTH.

'Tis just the same down here; so much so that it is a marvel to me that you, who differ so totally from me in other respects, should resemble me exactly in this.

MOON.

Nay, I resemble you also in form, in rotatory movement, and in being illumined by the sun; and the resemblance

you marvel at is no more wonderful than our resemblance in these other particulars, seeing that evil is a condition as common to all the planets of the universe, or at all events of our solar system, as is rotundity and the other points just noted by me. Indeed, I will venture to say that if you could raise your voice so as to be heard by Uranus or Saturn, or any other planet of our system, and were to ask it whether unhappiness existed there, or whether good or evil most prevailed within its limits, any one of them would give you the same answer that I have done. This I am prepared to assert, because I put these very questions to Venus and to Mercury, which two planets from time to time approach more closely to me than I do to you; and I have also asked the same thing from one or two comets which happened to pass near me, and all alike replied in the same terms. Nay, I am quite confident that the sun himself, and all the fixed stars would say the same.

EARTH.

Well, for all you say, I hope for the best, and especially at this time, since men assure me of great happiness in the near future.

MOON.

Hope away as much as you please. I promise you that you will have to be content with hoping for ever.

EARTH.

Hush! Observe—do you see what's happening? The men and animals are beginning to stir. You know that down here it is night, and they were all sleeping; but, alarmed by our talking in this way, they are all awaking in mortal terror.

MOON.

But with me, as you see, it is day.

EARTH.

Well, well, I don't wish to frighten my creatures and disturb their sleep, which, poor thing, is the greatest consolation they possess. So we'll leave off now, and resume our conversation another time. So good day to you.

MOON.

Good night.

THE WAGER OF PROMETHEUS.

IN the year 833,275 of the reign of Jove, the College of the Muses promulgated and affixed in all public places of the city and suburbs of Hypernephelus certain printed notifications inviting all the gods, greater and lesser, as well as the other inhabitants of the said city, who might at any time have discovered any valuable invention, to submit the same, either actually or in the form of a model, or by means of written description, to certain judges appointed by the said College. At the same time, lamenting that its notorious poverty prevented it from being so liberal as it could have wished, it offered as a prize for the inventor of the discovery which should be adjudged to be the most beautiful or useful, a crown of laurel, with the privilege of wearing the same by day or night, in public or in private, in the city or elsewhere, together with the prerogative of being painted, sculptured, engraved, moulded, or otherwise

represented in any manner or material, bearing on his brow this emblem of his triumph.

Not a few of the celestials competed for this prize, chiefly by way of pastime, a thing no less needful to the inhabitants of Hypernephelus than it is to those of other cities. It does not appear that any of them were actuated by any particular desire to win the laurel crown, which indeed was intrinsically not worth as much as a cotton night-cap; while as to glory, if men themselves now that they have become philosophers despise it, it may be imagined how it is contemned by the gods, who are so much wiser than men, nay who, according to Pythagoras and Plato, are the only beings who possess wisdom.

In due course the prize was awarded, and, with an impartiality almost unexampled in such competitions, it was adjudged to those who most truly deserved it, without any underhand solicitations, or bribery, or other undue influences. Of all the competitors three were deemed specially worthy of reward: Bacchus, for the invention of wine; Minerva, for that of oil, so necessary to the gods for anointing their bodies after the use of the bath; and Vulcan, for his invention of a copper kettle, said to be economical in its principle, whereby cooking could be effected expeditiously, and with a small expenditure of fuel. Under these circumstances it was found necessary to divide the prize into three portions, and to award to each of these competitors a sprig of the laurel crown. But all three of them declined to receive the prize either in whole or part. Vulcan said that as he had to stand generally over the fire at his forge in a constant state of perspiration and toil, the crown on his head would be an inconvenient encumbrance; besides which it would expose him to the risk of being burnt or scorched, in case at any time a spark

should fall on its dry leaves and set fire to it. Minerva bluntly alleged that, as she had to bear on her head a helmet so large, according to Homer, as to cover the armies of a hundred cities,¹ she could not on any account be plagued with a laurel crown in addition. Finally, Bacchus said he had no wish to exchange his mitre² and crown of vine leaves for a wreath of laurel; adding at the same time that he would willingly have accepted it, if he might have been allowed to fix it up as a sign in front of his tavern. To this, however, the Muses would not consent; and so the laurel crown remained deposited in their treasury.

Of all the others who had competed for this prize none begrudged it to the three deities who had thus won and declined it; nor did any murmur at the decision of the judges, or object to their award, save one alone. This was Prometheus, who had entered into the competition with his exhibit of the earthen model which he had employed in the formation of the first man, to which he had attached a written specification setting forth the properties and functions of the human race which he had invented.

No little astonishment was caused by the dissatisfaction of Prometheus in a case like this of which all the other competitors, successful and unsuccessful alike, had made so light. But on investigating the matter, it was ascertained that he had set his heart, not so much on the honour of the thing, as on some substantial advantage which he thought he should attain by success. Some are of opinion that he had proposed to make use of the crown for the protection of his head against tempests, in the belief that the laurel was impenetrable to lightning;³ just as it is narrated of the Emperor Tiberius that whenever he heard thunder he used to put his crown on his head. But this hypothesis

¹ See Note 20.

² See Note 21.

³ See Note 22.

is scarcely tenable in view of the fact that in Hypernephelus it never thunders or lightens. Others, with greater probability, affirm that Prometheus, who was getting up in years, was beginning to lose his hair, and, like other people in the same predicament, was much annoyed at this, and as he had not read the praise of baldness pronounced by Synesius,¹ or, as is more likely, did not believe in it, they say that, like Cæsar when he was Dictator, he merely wanted to conceal beneath a diadem the bareness of his head.

But to return to the facts. One day it happened that Prometheus fell into a discussion on the subject with Momus, and complained bitterly that such things as wine, and oil, and copper kettles should be thought of more importance than the human race, which he asserted to be the noblest work the immortals had ever produced. Failing, however, to convince Momus, who kept on advancing all sorts of arguments to the contrary, he proposed to him that they should both go down together to the earth, and visit at random the first place in each of the divisions of the globe that they should find to be inhabited by men. Then they laid a wager with each other; Prometheus betting that in each of these five places, or in the majority of them, there should be found positive proofs that man is the most perfect creature in the universe. Momus betted the opposite; the amount of the wager was agreed on; and straightway they began their descent towards the earth, directing their course first towards the new world, since their curiosity was greatly stimulated by its very name, and by the fact that up to that time none of the immortals had ever set foot on it.

They first checked their flight at the country of Popian, in the southern part of the continent, not far from the river

¹ See Note 23.

Cauca, at a spot where there appeared many tokens of human occupation, traces of cultivation on the plains, and numerous roads, though these last were interrupted in many places and full of obstructions, such as trees cut down and lying stretched across them. They also saw several places which appeared to be graveyards, and here and there some human bones. But for all this, the two celestials, though they looked carefully in every direction, could not see so much as a shadow of living men, or hear the sound of a human voice. They then proceeded, now walking, now flying, for the space of many miles, passing in their course mountains and rivers, but finding everywhere the same signs as of recent human habitation, and the same complete solitude.

‘How is it,’ said Momus to Prometheus, ‘how is it that these districts are so deserted, notwithstanding the evident signs they present of having been lately inhabited?’

Prometheus endeavoured to account for the circumstance as being due probably to the irruption of the sea, or to the earthquakes, and hurricanes, and excessive rains which are known to be common in torrid regions; and indeed, as he spoke, they heard in all the neighbouring woods what seemed to be the constant dropping of water from the branches of the trees as they were agitated by the wind. But Momus was unable to comprehend how that district could be subject to marine inundation, seeing that the sea was so far from the spot that it could nowhere be descried; and still less could he conceive how earthquakes or hurricanes or rains could have swept all the men out of the country, while they had spared the jaguars and apes and ant-eaters and eagles, and hundreds of other animals and birds which abounded in the neighbourhood.

At last, however, as they descended into a wide valley,

they perceived what seemed to be a little group of cottages or wooden huts, thatched with palm leaves, and each surrounded by an enclosure something like a stockade. In front of one of these cabins were assembled a number of people, some standing, some seated, forming a circle around an earthen cauldron which was suspended over a large fire. The two celestials assumed the human form and drew near, and then Prometheus, having courteously saluted the group, addressed himself to one who appeared to be their chief, and asked what they were doing, whereupon the following dialogue ensued :—

SAVAGE.

What are we doing? Can't you see we are eating?

PROMETHEUS.

What good cheer have ye?

SAVAGE.

Nothing but this bit of meat.

PROMETHEUS.

Is it the meat of a domestic animal, or of a wild one?

SAVAGE.

Of a domestic one, to be sure ; why, it's a bit of my own son.

PROMETHEUS.

What ! had you a calf for a son, as Pasiphae had?

SAVAGE.

A calf! no ; a man of course, such as other people have.

PROMETHEUS.

Are you talking seriously—do you mean to say you eat your own flesh?

SAVAGE.

No—not my own of course, but that of the young fellow I told you of. It was for this very purpose that I bred him, and took the trouble to rear him.

PROMETHEUS.

What—to eat him?

SAVAGE.

What do you see so wonderful in that? Eat him? of course I'll eat him, and his mother too by-and-by, since now she's not likely to breed me any more of them.

MOMUS.

Ay, just as one eats up the hen after having eaten all the eggs.

SAVAGE.

Just so; and as to the other women I keep, since it seems they're not going to produce young ones, I mean to eat them too. And these slaves of mine that you see, do you suppose I would keep them alive except that I might every now and then have some of their young ones to eat? But when they grow old I'll eat them up too, one after another, if I live long enough.¹

PROMETHEUS.

And these slaves of yours, do they belong to your own nation, or to some other one?

¹ See Note 24.

SAVAGE.

To another one.

PROMETHEUS.

Does it live far from here ?

SAVAGE.

Very ; so far that a rivulet runs between the place where their huts were and ours. There, behind that little hill, is the spot where they used to live, but our people have destroyed them.

Meanwhile it struck Prometheus that the rest of the group of natives were ogling him with the sort of loving look with which the cat regards the rat, so, to avoid being eaten up by the creatures of his own fashioning, he soared aloft into the air without loss of time, and Momus with him ; and they were in such a fright that, as they flew away, they seasoned the banquet of the barbarians with the same sort of condiments as those which the Harpies contributed to the tables of the Trojans ;¹ the savages, however, more famished and less fastidious than the comrades of Æneas, addressed themselves forthwith to their repast.

And now Prometheus, much disappointed with the new world, proposed that they should direct their course without delay towards the old one—that is to say, towards Asia ; and so, having almost instantaneously traversed the space intervening between the new and the old Indies, they alighted close to Agra, on a plain covered by a vast multitude of people who were assembled around an excavation filled with fuel, on one side of which were seen sundry men bearing lighted torches and about to kindle the pyre ; while on the other side, on a sort of scaffold or platform,

¹ See Virgil, *Æneid* iii. 209 sqq.

was a young woman, sumptuously attired and decked with barbaric ornaments, who danced and sang, and evinced every indication of exuberant joy.

At this sight Prometheus imagined that he beheld a second Lucretia or a new Virginia, some rival perhaps of the daughters of Erectheus, or some imitator of Iphigenia, or of Codrus, of Curtius, or Decius, who, in obedience to some oracle, was about to immolate herself voluntarily for the good of her country; and even when he was informed that the woman was about to devote herself to death in consequence of the decease of her husband,¹ he concluded that, like Alcestis, she designed by the sacrifice of herself to recall him to life.

But when he learned that she had resolved to burn herself to death merely because such was the custom of widows in her country; and that she had always hated her husband, and moreover that she was at that time intoxicated, and finally that the dead man, instead of being resuscitated by this sacrifice, was to be burned on the pyre along with the widow, he immediately turned his back on the spectacle, and directed his course towards Europe, accompanied by Momus, with whom by the way he had the following conversation :—

MOMUS.

When, with infinite risk to yourself, you stole fire from heaven to impart it to men, would you ever have dreamt that they would use it, some to cook each other in pots and pans, and others to burn themselves alive?

PROMETHEUS.

No, truly. But consider, dear Momus, that those of them

¹ The now prohibited, and it may be hoped now nearly exploded, rite of Suttee in India.

THE WAGER OF PROMETHEUS.

whom we have as yet seen were only barbarians, and it is not fair to form one's judgment of men from such as these, but rather from civilised peoples such as we are now going to visit; and among them I am confident that we shall see and hear such things as will not only extort your admiration but excite your astonishment.

C
MOMUS.

Well, as for me, if men be, as you say, the most perfect race of beings in the universe, I cannot see why it is necessary that they should first become ~~what~~ ^{that} you call civilised before they can abstain from burning themselves alive, and eating their own children; whereas the other animals, which are all barbarous in their nature, never deliberately burn themselves, unless it be the phoenix, which, by the way, is never to be seen; very few of ~~them~~ eat any of their own kind; and still more rarely ~~are they~~ known to devour their own offspring; and even then, far from generating them, as it seems men do, expressly for this purpose, they are only impelled to it by the direst necessity.

Consider, too, that of the five divisions of the world, one alone, and that not comparable in size to any of the other four, and not even the whole of that division itself, is endowed with this civilisation which you so highly extol, and which prevails nowhere else, except in one or two trifling portions of another division of the earth.¹ Again, you yourself will admit that this civilisation, even where it prevails, is far from being completed and consummated to such a degree that the inhabitants of even Paris or Philadelphia can be said to have reached the full measure of

¹ It should be remembered that at the time when this was written, the European settlements in America were comparatively in their infancy.

perfection conceivably attainable by the human race. Well, in order to bring them up even to their present imperfect standard of civilisation, think during what a vast period these peoples have had to strive and toil—ay, through as many ages as have elapsed since the beginning of the world to the present time. Add to this, that almost all the discoveries and inventions which have been most indispensable to the advancement of civilisation, or which have most greatly conduced to it, have had their origin, not so much from reason as from chance; and therefore human progress may be said to be the result of accident rather than the work of nature; and where such fortuitous circumstances have not arisen, we see that men are still plunged in a state of barbarism, although they have been in existence quite as long as civilised peoples have.

From these considerations I would infer as follows:—If uncivilised men are greatly inferior to all other animals; if civilisation, which is the opposite of barbarism, is not even now possessed save by a fraction of the human race; if, moreover, even this fraction has only attained to that civilisation after the lapse of countless ages, and that mainly owing to the operation of accident; finally, if that civilisation itself is still far from complete, I would ask you to consider whether your opinion regarding the human race would not be more accurate if you modified it at least to the extent of saying that that race is supreme among created things, as you assert; but supreme in imperfection rather than in perfection; though men in their conversation and their judgments continually confound these two things, forming their opinions from certain false premisses which they themselves have laid down, and erroneously hold to be true. It is certain that all other creatures are in the beginning endowed with the full measure of that perfection which is

compatible with their natures ; and even if it were not clear, as we have seen that it is, that barbarous man is inferior to all other creatures, I fail to perceive how the fact of being originally and by nature most imperfect, as man confessedly is, gives him a claim to be regarded as more perfect than all other creatures. •

Add to this, that human civilisation, so difficult of attainment and apparently so impossible of being brought to perfection, is also of so unstable and precarious a character that it is always liable to decay, as indeed has often been observed in the cases of many nations, which had attained to no inconsiderable share of it.

In short, I am fully of opinion that if your brother Epimetheus had exhibited to the College of the Muses the model which he employed when he formed the first ass or the first frog, he would probably have carried off the prize which you failed to obtain. However, I am willing to concede to you that man is the most perfect of all creatures, if you will concede to me that his perfection resembles that which Plotinus¹ conceded to the world. He, as you may remember, said that the world was absolutely perfect and complete ; but he added that, this being so, it followed that it must contain, among other things, all conceivable evils ; and in fact we know that it does contain as much evil as it can well hold. Judged by this standard, I might possibly agree with Leibnitz that this world is the best of all possible worlds.

There is no reason to doubt that Prometheus was all ready with a clear, precise, and dialectic rejoinder to all these arguments ; but it is certain that he failed to produce it, for just at that stage of the discussion they found themselves

¹ See Note 25.

hovering over the city of London. There they alighted, and perceiving a great crowd of people assembled around the door of a private house, they joined the throng, and entering the house, they saw there a man lying on his back on a bed, with a pistol in his hand, and a wound in his chest, quite dead, and beside him two children, also lying dead. Several of the people of the house were in the apartment, and one or two magistrates, who were examining them, while a clerk was taking down their replies. Thereupon the following dialogue ensued between Prometheus and one of the domestics :—

PROMETHEUS.

Who are these unfortunates ?

DOMESTIC.

They are, or rather were, my master and his two little boys.

PROMETHEUS.

Who killed them ?

DOMESTIC.

My master.

PROMETHEUS.

Do you mean to say he killed himself and his two children ?

DOMESTIC.

Precisely.

PROMETHEUS.

Oh, what a deplorable case ! Some terrible calamity must have overtaken him.

DOMESTIC.

Not to my knowledge.

PROMETHEUS.

Well, probably he was poor, or despised by all, or unfortunate in love, or in disfavour at Court.

DOMESTIC.

On the contrary, he was very rich ; he was esteemed by all, he was indifferent to love, and in high favour with the king.

PROMETHEUS.

Then how came he to commit so desperate an act ?

DOMESTIC.

From sheer weariness of life, as he himself has certified in a writing he has left.

PROMETHEUS.

And what are these magistrates doing ?

DOMESTIC.

They are making an investigation as to the sanity or otherwise of my master ; for if it should be established that he was in his sound mind, his property will by law be escheated to the Crown ; and, as I think, there is nothing calculated to prevent this result.

PROMETHEUS.

But tell me, had he no friend or relative to whom he

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might have committed the care of these poor children, instead of killing them?

DOMESTIC.

Oh yes, he had plenty such, and, among others, one with whom he was specially intimate, to whom in fact he has bequeathed his dog.¹

At this juncture Momus was about to congratulate Prometheus on the beautiful results of civilisation, and on the wonderful charm it seemed to impart to life; while at the same time he was about to remind him that no animal except man was ever known to commit suicide, far less to destroy its progeny from sheer despair; but he was anticipated by Prometheus, who, abandoning the idea of visiting the two portions of the world which still remained to be inspected, frankly admitted that he had lost the wager, and paid down the amount of the stake.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A PHYSICIST AND A METAPHYSICIAN.

PHYSICIST.

Eureka, Eureka—I have discovered it!

METAPHYSICIAN.

What is it—what have you discovered?

PHYSICIST.

The art of living long.

¹ See Note 26.

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METAPHYSICIAN.

And what is that book you are carrying?

PHYSICIST.

It is my exposition of the art; and if by means of this discovery, other men shall attain to long life, I shall, by reason of it, live for ever, since it will yield me undying fame.

METAPHYSICIAN.

Be guided by me. Get a leaden casket; shut up your book in it; bury it in the ground; and before you die, don't forget to leave directions as to where it is, so that men may have it in their power to go and dig it up, in case they ever discover the art of living happily.

PHYSICIST.

And meanwhile?

METAPHYSICIAN.

Meanwhile, and till then, it will be worthless. I should think more highly of it if it unfolded the art of dying soon.

PHYSICIST.

Nay, that has long been known, and there was no difficulty in making that discovery.

METAPHYSICIAN.

Well, in any case, that art is preferable to yours.

PHYSICIST.

Why?

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METAPHYSICIAN.

Simply because, if life be not happy, and if it never yet has been so, it were better for us all that it should be short than long.

PHYSICIST.

Oh, by no means; for life is a thing to be desired for itself, and all men naturally desire and love it.

METAPHYSICIAN.

Ay, men do so, but they deceive themselves, just as the vulgar deceive themselves when they suppose that colours are properties inherent in objects, while in reality they do not reside in the objects, but are the effect of light. I maintain that what men really desire and love is happiness; and they do not prize life save as they imagine it to be the vehicle or the effective factor of that; and it is happiness, and not mere existence, which in reality they love, although it commonly occurs that they erroneously attribute to the latter the love which in fact they cherish for the former. And indeed this illusion, like that as to colours, is perfectly natural. But if it be necessary to prove that love of life for its own sake is not naturally or necessarily inherent in man, we have only to consider that in ancient times many men preferred death to life; and even in our own day not a few desire death under certain circumstances, and some destroy themselves with their own hands. Now these things could not be if the love of life for its own sake were an imperious instinct of our nature. But on the other hand, the love of happiness is so deeply implanted in all living creatures that so long as the world lasts they will never cease to cherish it and to exert themselves for its gratification.

As for your assertion that life is a blessing in itself and

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considered in the abstract, I defy you to prove it by any arguments drawn from any system whether of physical or metaphysical philosophy. I admit that a happy life, would be an unquestionable blessing, but it would be so, not because of its being life, but because of its being happy. An unhappy life is, by reason of its unhappiness, a positive evil; and, seeing that Nature, or at all events human nature, renders unhappiness inseparable from life, you yourself must perceive the conclusions which must necessarily ensue.

PHYSICIST.

I beg you to quit this subject—it is too depressing. And now, leaving all subtleties, tell me your candid opinion on the following point. If a man could live, and did live, for ever—I don't mean after death, but without dying at all—do you think his condition would be enviable?

METAPHYSICIAN.

To an impossible supposition I shall reply with one or two instances drawn from fable. I myself have no knowledge of immortality, and therefore I cannot answer you from experience. Neither have I ever met with one who was exempt from death, and so it is only from myth and fiction that we can glean any information on the question which you have propounded. If we had Cagliostro¹ here, perhaps he might be able to throw some light on the subject, since he claimed to have lived for several generations; though, as he finally died like other people, even he cannot be regarded as an immortal.

Well, let us take the case of Chiron the sage, who, although of immortal nature, yet in the course of time got so sick of life that he solicited and obtained from

¹ See Note 27.

Jove permission to die, and died accordingly.¹ Now consider, if immortality could be burdensome to a god, what would it be to men?

Then again, think of the Hyperboreans, a celebrated people though not known to us, since they cannot be approached either by land or sea. They are said to be passing rich in all good things, and especially in a race of magnificent asses, of which they are wont to compose their hecatombs. Unless I am mistaken, it is in their power to live for ever, since they are superior to all infirmities, and are exempt from the ravages of war or discord, and know not famine, or vice or sin, and yet they all die, for after a thousand years or so of life, sated with existence, they of their own free will spring from a certain rock into the sea and are there drowned.²

Or reflect on the case of the two brothers Cleobis and Biton, sons of the priestess of Juno, who, on a feast day, the mules not being at hand, themselves dragged their mother's car, and conveyed her to the temple of the goddess. For this act of piety their mother prayed to Juno to reward them with the greatest benefit which could happen to mortals ---and what ensued? The goddess, instead of making them immortal, as she could well have done, and as it was then the custom to do in like cases, conferred upon them an instantaneous and painless death.³

Similar to this was the instance of the brothers Agamedes and Trophonius, the architects of the porch of the temple of Delphi. On the completion of their work they prayed Apollo to reward them; and the god replied that he would do so within seven days, during which interval they should feast and make merry with their friends. On the seventh

¹ See Lucian, *Dialogue*, *Menipp.* and *Chiron.*

² Pindar, Strabo, and Pliny.

³ Herodotus, i. 31.

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night he sent them a blissful sleep, from which they never awoke to ask him for any other gift.

But while we are on the subject of myths and legends, here is another story regarding which I have a question to ask you. I know very well that the like of you hold it to be established that in all inhabited countries, and under all climates, human life, with some few exceptions, generally lasts for about the same period on the average. But certain good men of old¹ have related that in some parts of India and Ethiopia men never live more than forty years, and any who live so long as that are accounted very old, while children of seven years old are there considered marriageable; and indeed this last particular is paralleled, or nearly so, by the conditions of life to be seen at this day in Guinea, in the Deccan, and other regions situated in the torrid zone. Well, assuming it to be the case that there are races of men who, as a rule, live no longer than forty years—I refer to the normal span of life, not to cases where it is artificially curtailed, as is said to be the practice among the Hottentots—if, I say, there be such races, I would ask you whether in your judgment such races ought to be for this reason less happy than others, or more so?

PHYSICIST.

Less happy, beyond doubt, seeing that they are more quickly overtaken by death.

METAPHYSICIAN.

I think the very opposite, and that for the very same reason. But this is not my present point. I beg your close attention here. I just now denied that mere life, bare existence, was a thing in itself good, and to be desired for

¹ Pliny, and Arrian.

its own sake. But that which alone truly deserves the name of life—~~I~~ refer to the energy and fulness of its sensations—is naturally appreciated by men, since action and sensation, provided they be not in themselves painful and productive of unhappiness, are in themselves exhilarating by reason of the very vitality of their nature, even although they may be destitute of any other pleasing characteristics. Now in the case of those races whose lives are bounded by a span of forty years, that is to say about half of the full period allotted to other men, I hold that their existence must be, for the time it lasts, twice as full of this true life as ours is, inasmuch as they have to grow to maturity, attain to their perfection, and pass to decline, in half the time granted for these purposes to us. This being so, it would seem probable that the vital energy of their nature would be proportionate to the brevity of their existence, and would therefore be at all times twice as exuberant as ours is; while all their actions, and all the operations of their volition, would be characterised by an activity and vivacity corresponding to this greater energy.

Thus their lives, though shorter than ours, would comprise as much of all that constitutes life as falls to our lot; and, being distributed over a smaller number of years, it would suffice to fill and occupy them; and would leave few aching voids in their existence; whereas the same measure of vitality is insufficient for the due occupation of a period double in extent. All their actions and sensations being characterised by greater intensity than ours are, and comprised within a shorter period, they would be sufficient to fill and vivify their whole life, while our lives, though much longer, present many weary intervals, void of all action or vivid sensation. And since, as I think, the main desiderandum is, not mere existence, but happy existence, and since the

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felicity of any creatures is not measured by the mere number of their days, I conclude that the life of those races, though briefer than ours, is probably more fruitful of satisfaction, or of what we call pleasure; and that it is therefore to be preferred to our life, or to those of the earliest kings of Assyria, of Egypt, of China, or of India, who are fabled to have lived thousands of years.

The sum of the matter then is this: I have no desire for immortality, and would willingly leave it to the fishes, who, according to Leeuwenhoek,¹ live for ever, provided they are not eaten up by men or whales. Nay, instead of retarding or arresting the development of our bodies in order to prolong our lives, as was proposed by Maupertuis,² I should wish to see them shortened to the measure of that of the insects which we call ephemerids, regarding which it is said that the most long-lived among them never live longer than a single day, and for all that, when they die they have grandchildren and great-grandchildren. If this were so, we should have no time for *ennui* and weariness of life. What think you of this line of reasoning?

PHYSICIST.

It fails to convince me. I know you are wedded to your metaphysics, but as for me, I'll stick to my physics. It seems to please you to deal in sophistical subtleties, but I prefer to take a plain common-sense view of things. And without having recourse to the microscope to elucidate the matter, I hold that life is a better thing than death; and I would award the apple to the former, without investigating the naked beauties of either.

METAPHYSICIAN.

Well, in a sense I agree with you. Yet I bethink me of

¹ See Note 28

² See Note 29.

the custom of the ancients, who, whenever they had an unhappy day, used to throw a black pebble into their quivers, and a white one on every happy day;¹ and I cannot help speculating how few white stones were probably found in these quivers at the death of each, and what a multitude of black ones. As for me, I should like to be able to see all the pebbles which represent the days of life now left to me, and to have power to separate the black ones from the white, and to throw the former away, and deduct them from my life, reserving only the white ones, though full well knowing that they would not make much of a pile, and that even their whiteness would be somewhat dingy.

PHYSICIST.

Many men, on the other hand, even if all their pebbles were black beyond comparison, would like to be able to add to their number, black as they might be; since they always hold that none of them can be so black as the last one of all will be. And they who, like me, are of this persuasion, have it now in their power to add many such pebbles to their lives, by following the instructions set forth in this book of mine.

METAPHYSICIAN.

Let every man think and act as he judges best. Death too will not fail to do his part. But if you wish to confer a real benefit on men, then, instead of an art calculated to prolong their lives, I would recommend you to invent one calculated to elevate and improve their existence by enriching and ennobling their perceptions and activities. In this way you will truly enlarge human life; and by worthily filling up those dreary intervals during which our being is

¹ See Note 30.

not so much life as vegetation, you may claim to have conduced to its prolongation. All this, too, you may accomplish without any vain pursuit of the impossible, and without doing any violence to Nature; on the contrary, by such efforts you will co-operate with her and second her designs. Does it not strike you that the ancients lived, in the true sense of the term, more thoroughly and intensely than we do, notwithstanding that, by reason of the formidable perils which they constantly encountered, they generally died earlier than we do?

In this way, I say, you may confer a vast benefit on men; whose lives have ever been, I will not say happy, but at least less afflicted, the more they have been stirred by action, and so fully occupied as to exclude griefs and cares. But when their existence is cursed with ease, and poisoned by the vacuity of inaction, it seems to justify the dictum of Pyrrho that there is in effect little difference between life and death; though if I believed this, I confess that death would seem to me very terrible.

In fine, life ought to be full of life—true life. Failing this, surely death would be infinitely preferable.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN TASSO AND HIS FAMILIAR SPIRIT.¹

SPIRIT.

Well, Torquato, how do you feel?

TASSO.

I leave you to judge how a man is likely to feel in a prison, and up to his neck in woes.

¹ See Note 31.

SPIRIT.

Come, cheer up. After supper it is no fit time for moping. Pluck up your spirit, and let us snap our fingers at care.

TASSO.

I am in no mood for it. But your presence and your conversation always cheer me. Come, sit here beside me.

SPIRIT.

What, *I* sit? It is not easy for a spirit to sit. But there,—consider me to be seated.

TASSO.

Oh, that I could again behold my Leonora!¹ Each time her image presents itself to my mind I feel a thrill of joy which vibrates from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and convulses every nerve of my frame. At times, when I think of her, I feel revive within me emotions and memories which for a while make me fancy myself once more the same Torquato which I used to be before I had experience of misfortunes and of men, and whom now I bewail as one dead. Of a truth I am convinced that intercourse with the world, and communion with suffering, have the effect of depressing and deadening within us our original nature. And though from time to time it may reassert itself for a while, yet as years go on this occurs more and more rarely, we retire into ourselves more and more, and sink ever deeper into this fatal lethargy, till at last even while we live we are virtually dead. I marvel how it is that the thought of a woman should have the power to

¹ See Note 32.

re-awaken my soul and make me forget my woes. Were it not that I know there is no hope of my ever seeing her again, I should fancy that even now the capacity of being happy is not finally extinguished within me.

SPIRIT.

Which do you imagine to be the more sweet, the sight of your beloved, or the thought of her?

TASSO.

I am not sure. This much, however, I will say: when Leonora was present to me she appeared but a woman; now that she is absent she looms as a goddess.

SPIRIT.

Ay, such goddesses are so benign that when one of them meets a man face to face she quickly divests herself of her divinity, and strips off the rays of her celestial glory and puts them in her pocket, so as not to dazzle and blind the mortal who approaches her.

TASSO.

I believe you are right. But don't you think this is a great defect in women that when you come to know them they turn out so different from what you had imagined them?

I don't see how you can blame them for being made of flesh and blood instead of ambrosia and nectar. I should like to know what earthly thing really has the shadow or the thousandth part of the perfection which you must needs

attribute to women. And I must say it appears to me strange that while you evince no surprise at men being men, that is to say, creatures little deserving of praise or esteem, you yet cannot understand how it is that women are not angels.

TASSO.

Well, for all you say, I am dying to see her again and to talk to her once more.

SPIRIT.

Come then, this very night I'll bring her to you in a dream; beautiful as youth itself, and so gracious that you will pluck up spirit to talk to her much more freely and frankly than you ever did before. In fact you'll go so far as to press her hand, while she will look on you so tenderly as to fill your soul with ecstasy and overwhelm you with bliss; so much so that throughout the whole of to-morrow, every time you shall think of this dream your heart will bound with delight.

TASSO.

A precious comfort, forsooth! A dream instead of the reality—a fiction instead of the truth!

SPIRIT.

What is truth?

TASSO.

Pilate himself did not know less than I do as to what it is.

SPIRIT.

Well, I'll tell you. The only difference between the

truth and a dream is that generally the latter is much more beautiful and pleasing than the former ever can be.

TASSO.

Do you mean to assert that a delight dreamt of is equal to a real delight?

SPRIT.

I do. Indeed I know the case of a man who, whenever he dreams of the woman he loves, throughout the whole of the following day always shuns her society, and has no wish even to see her, well knowing that she never could come up to the ideal of her which had been presented to him in his dream, and that the reality of her was certain to obliterate that pleasing delusion, and rob him of the delight which it had afforded him. Indeed I cannot blame the ancients, so much more diligent and ingenious than the moderns in all that concerns human enjoyment, for their practice in relation to dreams. Their custom was to take a variety of measures for securing and promoting happiness in dreams; and I would not censure Pythagoras for having advised men not to sup on beans, since these were supposed to be unfavourable to pleasant dreams, and to be apt to produce troubled visions.¹ I would even excuse those superstitious persons who, before retiring to rest, used to make prayers and libations to Mercury, the ruler of dreams, to send them pleasant ones; and to that end also they used to have the image of that deity engraved on the foot of their bedsteads.² By these and such-like expedients they hoped to obtain during sleep that happiness which was

¹ Cicero, Pliny, Plutarch, etc.

² Meursius, *Exercit. Crit.* ii. 2, 19.

denied them in their waking hours; and I do believe that to a certain partial extent they attained their wish, and that their prayers were granted by Mercury more often than they were conceded by any of the other gods.

TASSO.

But we know that the chief aim of men is pleasure, either bodily or mental. Now you would have us to believe that this is attainable only, or mainly, in dreams. From this it would follow that we ought to make up our minds to live only in order to dream. This is a proposition which I cannot bring myself to admit.

SPIRIT.

But already you have practically brought yourself to admit it, seeing that you live, and consent to live. Do you know what pleasure is?

TASSO.

By my faith, I have not had sufficient experience of it to enable me to answer your question.

SPIRIT.

No man has any true experience of it. Men's ideas regarding it are purely speculative, since pleasure or happiness is in itself unreal, a mere abstract and speculative idea, a desire, not an actual condition. It is but a sentiment which man conceives in thought, but never realises in fact; nay, it is not even so much as a sentiment, it is but a conception of the fancy. See you not that even while you grasp some so-called delight, some condition infinitely desired and with infinite difficulty attained, even then your

very satisfaction fails to satisfy you, and you ever look forward to the attainment of some higher satisfaction still. Thus that which you call pleasure is merely expectation—a phantom for ever hovering in the future; and you are for ever anticipating the moment when you shall overtake it. But ere that moment arrives, the illusion melts away, leaving you nought but the vain hope of attaining it at some future time, and the sorry comfort of trying to persuade yourself and your friends that you have, at least partially, grasped it. Therefore, whoever consents to live, in reality accepts but a dream, seeing that in fact he always dwells in a mere expectation of happiness to come, or a mere belief that he has at some former time been happy; two things both of them false and illusory.

TASSO.

Then can men never be assured that they are happy at any time then actually present to them?

SPIRIT.

If they could be assured to that effect then they would be actually happy. But I would ask you yourself whether you can recall a single instant in your life in which you ever said to yourself with full and absolute conviction, '*I am* happy;' though doubtless you have daily said, and that sincerely, '*I shall be* happy;' and sometimes, though with somewhat less sincerity of conviction, '*I have been* happy.' Thus it is plain that happiness is ever either past or future—never present.

TASSO.

That is as much as to say that it never exists.

SPIRIT.

Just so.

TASSO.

Not even in dreams?

SPIRIT.

Strictly speaking, not even in them.

TASSO.

And yet the main end and aim of our existence, if not its sole one, is pleasure; by which I mean happiness, which ought to be synonymous with pleasure, no matter what source it proceeds from.

SPIRIT.

Assuredly.

TASSO.

From which it follows that, since life ever fails in its main aim, it remains perpetually imperfect, and thus is in perpetual conflict with itself.

SPIRIT.

Possibly.

TASSO.

I see no 'possibly' about it—it *must* be so. And if so, why do we go on living? Why, I say, do we consent to continue such an existence?

SPIRIT.

How can I tell? You men ought to know best.

TASSO.

For my part, I swear *I* cannot tell.

SPIRIT.

Then you had better ask some one who is wiser than yourself. Perhaps you may find somebody able to satisfy you.

TASSO.

Ay, I'll do so. But as for this life I lead, it is an absolute violence to my nature. To say nothing of my sufferings, the mere tedium of it is killing me.

SPIRIT.

What is tedium?

TASSO.

Here, unfortunately, I *am* able to answer you from my own experience. To me it seems that tedium resembles the very atmosphere which fills all the spaces which intervene between material substances, as well as all the voids which occur in such substances themselves, so that wherever any substance terminates and another fails to present itself, it immediately occupies the vacant space. Similarly, in human life all the voids interposed between what we call pleasure and pain are immediately occupied by tedium. And just as in the material world, according to the Peripatetic philosophers, nature abhors a vacuum, so in our existence no absolute vacuum can exist, save when, from any cause, the mind intermits the power of thought itself. Thus at all other times the mind, regarded as a distinct entity from the body, must either be occupied by some sensation, or failing that, must be occupied by

tedium, which thus itself amounts to a sensation, as much as pain or pleasure.

SPIRIT.

And since all your so-called pleasures are feeble, thin, and unsubstantial as spiders' webs; then just as the atmosphere easily permeates the interstices of the latter, so this tedium penetrates and fills the intervals of the former. To me it seems that what you call tedium is nothing else than a mere craving for happiness, not satisfied by its attainment, nor actually disturbed by its reverse. Now this craving, as we have seen, never can be satisfied, and true pleasure never can be found. From this it results that human life is, so to say, made up and interwoven partly by suffering and partly by tedium, and never can escape from either one of these conditions save by falling into the other. This destiny, however, is not peculiar to you, but is common to all mankind.

TASSO.

What is the best remedy you could suggest for tedium?

SPIRIT.

There are three—sleep, opium, and pain; and of these the last is the most efficacious, for, believe me, when a man suffers pain he never experiences tedium.

TASSO.

Such a remedy is worse than the disorder. Rather than take *that* medicine I would gladly endure tedium as long as I live. But it seems to me that variety of occupation and sensation, although it cannot entirely free us from tedium

any more than it can confer actual pleasure, still is calculated to relieve the monotony of existence. But here in this prison, cut off from all human intercourse, and deprived even of permission to write, I am reduced for pastime to counting the tickings of the clock, or the rafters and cracks and wood-worms in the ceiling; while for variety I may contemplate the brick-work of the floor, or amuse myself with watching the moths and gnats which hover about my chamber. In such a condition I have nothing to alleviate the tedium of my life.

SPIRIT.

Tell me, how long have you been mewed up here?

TASSO.

Some weeks now. I thought you knew.

SPIRIT.

Are you conscious of any difference in your feelings now, as compared with what they were on the first day of your confinement?

TASSO.

Yes. At first my vexation was keener than it is now. I find that my mind, being neither amused nor distracted by external objects, is gradually forming the habit of communing with itself much more than it did at first, and with an increasingly soothing influence on my feelings. It seems to be acquiring the habit and the power of discoursing with itself, and even of prattling to me, so to speak, so that at times I feel as if I had in my head a party of people arguing with me, and the veriest trifles

which occur to my thoughts suffice to raise within me quite an animated discussion.

SPIRIT.

This mood will grow and become more habitual to you as time goes on; so much so that, if ever you be restored to society, you will actually feel more bored in the company of other men than ever you did in solitude. And do not suppose that this effect of seclusion is confined to persons of your temperament, naturally disposed to introspection, since, sooner or later, it is experienced by all persons. Furthermore, separation from one's fellows, and from all the stir of life, brings with it a distinct advantage. In these circumstances, especially if he be enlightened by experience, and disgusted with the world, a man begins to take a new view of things when thus considered from a distance, and human actions and motives appear to him in a more favourable light than they did when he stood close to them. He forgets their pettiness and vanity, and begins to imagine and, as it were, to create a world of his own fancy, and to esteem and even long for the intercourse of human society. Thus, so long as he has hopes of returning to the world at all, he continues to ruminate and feed on the thought of the satisfaction there to be found, just as he did in his first youth. In this way solitude may be said almost to operate like youth itself. It rejuvenates the mind; it restores and invigorates the powers of the imagination, and renews in jaded natures all the spring and elasticity of our early years, the decay of which you so much bewail.

But now I must leave you, for I see you grow drowsy; and I must go to prepare for you that exquisite dream which I promised I would send you this night. Thus,

between dreams waking and sleeping, shall you pass what remains to you of life, with no other object or advantage than merely to bring it to an end. This is the sole benefit to be extracted from life, and the sole end you should propose to yourself each morning as you awake. Long have you dragged a painful and weary existence; and that will be a blessed day when you will be able to toss it behind you. But, after all, here in your prison time flies just as quickly as it does in the halls and the gardens of your oppressor. Good-bye.

TASSO.

Good-bye, then, for the present. But listen. Your conversation is always very soothing to me: Not that it entirely dispels my depression, but whereas in your absence my condition resembles that of a pitch-dark night uncheered by moon or stars, while you are here it is like the mitigated gloom of twilight, pleasing rather than depressing to the senses. Therefore, in order that in future I may be able to summon you when so disposed, tell me where you live.

SPIRIT.

What, don't you know that yet?—In any generous liquor.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN NATURE AND AN ICELANDER.

An Icclander who had travelled over the greater part of the earth, and dwelt in many lands, was once upon a time wandering in the interior of Africa, on the equatorial line, in a region never previously visited by man. There he met with an adventure not unlike that encountered by Vasco di

Gama as he was about to pass the Cape of Good Hope, at which juncture that cape itself, guardian of the southern seas, rose up before him in the form of a giant, to deter him from entering on those unnavigated oceans.¹ Similarly, the Icelfander beheld at a great distance a colossal shape which at first he imagined to be formed of rock, and resembling in appearance the Titanic figures of Mercury which he had seen many years previously in the island of Pasqua. But as he drew nearer he perceived that it was the figure of a female of gigantic proportions, seated on the ground, with the upper part of her person erect, and her back supported by a mountain. Moreover, it was not an artificial image, but a living being, with a countenance beautiful yet terrible withal; its eyes and hair were raven-black; and it was gazing on him intently. Having sat thus for some time without addressing him, it ultimately spoke as follows:—

NATURE.

Who art thou, and what seekest thou in these regions where thy species has never yet been seen?

ICELANDER.

I am a poor Icelfander, seeking to flee from Nature. I have been fleeing from her nearly all my life in hundreds of other lands, and now I flee from her here.

NATURE.

As the squirrel flees from the rattlesnake, only to fall finally into its jaws,—I am she from whom you flee.

ICELANDER.

Nature?

¹ Camoens, *Lusiad*, Canto v.

NATURE.

None other.

ICELANDER.

I deeply grieve to hear it. No more terrible calamity could have overtaken me.

NATURE.

You might have judged that I haunted lands like this, where, as you know, my power is manifested more than in ordinary scenes. But what has moved you to shun me?

ICELANDER.

Know that in my earliest youth my first imperfect experiences convinced me of the vanity of life and the stupidity of man. I perceived that men were engaged in perpetual struggles with each other for the acquisition of pleasures which failed to please, and of wealth which was powerless to enrich. I saw that they endured, and inflicted on one another, infinite toils and woes which, unlike the pleasures and the wealth which they pursued, were fatally effective in their operation; and, in a word, that the more ardently they sought after happiness the farther they were removed from its attainment.

As I pondered on these things I came to the resolution to suppress in my breast all idle cravings and ambitions; to abstain from injuring others; to aim at no fancied amelioration of my lot; to contend with no man for any of the coveted advantages of the world; and to live a life of tranquil obscurity. In fine, despairing of happiness, as of a thing denied to mortals, the sole care which I proposed to myself was to try to escape from suffering. By this I do not

mean that I proposed to abstain from all activities, or from bodily exertion of every kind, since, as you well know, there is as wide a distinction between fatigue and pain as there is between a life of tranquillity and a life of idleness.

But as soon as I began to carry this resolution into effect I found by experience that so long as you dwell among men, and however carefully you may abstain from offending them, it is vain to imagine that you can escape molestation from them, since however much you may yield to their caprices, and however modest your pretensions may be, it is impossible to elude their antagonism, or to secure the smallest recognition of your dues.

From the hostility of men, however, I readily freed myself by shunning their society, and retiring into solitude, a thing easily obtained in my native island. But even in this condition, while I enjoyed not even the shadow of happiness, I could not escape from positive suffering. The intense cold of the long winter, and the excessive heat of the summer, two extremes characteristic of our climate, perpetually tormented me. Great part of my time was necessarily passed close to the fire in my endeavours to keep myself warm; thus my flesh was scorched and my eyes were blinded by the smoke; and whether in the house or in the open air I was a prey to incessant inconvenience. Nor was it possible for me to attain even that tranquillity of mind which I so ardently desired, since I was constantly disturbed by furious storms which swept the land and sea; by the menacing murmurs of Mount Hecla; or by the dread of conflagrations, so frequent in a country like ours where the buildings are constructed of wood.

It is true that such inconveniences as these seem trivial to one whose mind is engrossed in the activities of social life, or distracted by the perversity of his fellow-men; but

in the vacuity of a monotonous existence destitute alike of hopes and desires, and concerned solely in the quest of tranquillity, they assume formidable dimensions; while the more I shrank from human intercourse, and the more I lived to myself in the hope of avoiding injury or offence to others, the more I found myself disturbed by the causes I have just stated.

Therefore I determined to try change of scene, and to visit various lands and climes, in the hope of discovering one where, abstaining from offending others, I might myself escape offence; and where, if I failed to find happiness, I might at least avoid suffering. I was further moved to this resolution by a desire to discover whether or not you had assigned to the human race only a portion of the world, and certain climatic conditions, as in the case of certain animals and plants; and had appointed specific regions beyond whose limits men could not prosper, or even live without pain and difficulty, were it only that they themselves, and not you, should be responsible for their sufferings in case they should violate the limits imposed by your laws to human habitation.

I accordingly ranged the world round and made trial of almost all its countries, always and everywhere adhering to my resolution to give offence to no creature, and to aim at tranquillity and peace alone. But wherever I went I encountered suffering. In the tropics I was scorched by the heat; towards the poles I was frozen by the cold; in the more temperate zones I was afflicted by the instability of the climate; and everywhere I was persecuted by the convulsions of the elements. In many places I found that not a day passes without a storm, which is tantamount to saying that you daily wage war against the inhabitants of such regions, who have never

injured you. • In other spots, where the elements are usually serene, this is counterbalanced by the frequency of earthquakes, by the fury of volcanoes, and by incessant subterranean disturbances. Prodigious hurricanes and whirlwinds reign in regions and during seasons free from other convulsions. At times the roof over my head would be crushed by the weight of superincumbent snows. At other seasons the excessive floods of rain would cause the very earth to split and yawn under my feet; and often I have had to flee for sheer life from the swollen rivers which pursued me as if I had been guilty of some injury against them. Wild beasts, altogether unprovoked by me, have sought to devour me; serpents have tried to poison me; and in some places I have nearly been consumed by myriads of noxious insects. In all this I take no note of the ordinary perils of existence, though infinite in number, and perpetually impending over man, insomuch that a philosopher of antiquity used to maintain that the most sovereign remedy against fear was the consideration that all things are to be feared.¹

Neither did I enjoy immunity from bodily infirmities, although I ever was, as I am now, most temperate in the use of bodily indulgences. Indeed, I am wont to marvel, when I consider that you have implanted in us an insatiable desire of pleasure, deprived of which our life, baulked of its chief aim, is an imperfect thing; and yet you have ordained that the enjoyment of pleasure is of all human things the most injurious to the health and vigour of the body; the most calamitous in its effects; and the most unfavourable to the duration of life.

Nevertheless, do what I might, and abstain as I might from every indulgence, I have never failed to incur many and

¹ Seneca, *Nat. Quest.* vi. 2.

varied maladies, some of which endangered my life ; others threatened me with the loss of some member, or seemed to render it likely that I should drag on an existence even more miserable than I had before experienced ; while the mildest of them for days and weeks made life a burden to me.

And here I would remark a positive injustice on your part. In sickness we undergo new and unwonted sufferings in addition to our ordinary trials ; as if human life at its best was not sufficiently painful ; yet you have not compensated us for this by conferring on men occasional periods of unwonted and exuberant health, from which they might extract extraordinary satisfaction.

In snow-covered regions my eyesight was nearly blinded, as happens so commonly to the inhabitants of Lapland. Thus we are perpetually molested by the very sun and by the atmosphere, two things essential to our existence, and consequently impossible to escape from. The one vexes us with its damps or with its rigours ; the other by its burning heat or by the excess of its dazzling rays ; so that a man cannot endure exposure to the one or to the other without inconvenience or positive injury. In fine, I cannot remember to have passed a single day without some suffering ; whereas I am unable to count the number of those which I have passed without as much as a shadow of enjoyment ; and I perceive that we are doomed never to know happiness ; but ever to endure suffering ; and that even tranquillity is as unattainable as exertion is productive of misery.

From all this I am forced to the conclusion that you are the declared enemy of men, and of other animals, and of all your creatures. You are perpetually plotting against us, threatening us, or directly assaulting us. You are for ever wounding and mutilating us ; molesting and persecuting us ; and whether from habit, or because such is your inborn

character, you are the butcher of your own progeny, so to speak, and the destroyer of your own flesh and blood. Therefore I have given up all hope. Men, indeed, may cease to persecute those who withdraw from their society; but as for you, you cease not wantonly to pursue us, and, without provocation, you ever strive to crush us.

Now, too, I see at hand the hateful time of old age; an absolute and palpable evil, nay, the very climax of all evils; an evil, moreover, not accidental, and incidental to some only of your creatures, but deliberately predestined by you to all living things: foreseen by each one of us from childhood upwards; and commencing to manifest itself in each of us from his fifth lustre¹ onwards, with a deplorable gradual decline of vitality due to no fault of ours; so that barely one-third of human life is assigned to the bloom of existence; a few fleeting years are permitted for maturity and development; and all the rest is fore-ordained to decay and all its resulting ills.

NATURE.

Did you, then, imagine that the world was made for you? Learn that in all my works and institutes and operations, with a few rare exceptions, I have ever had in view considerations entirely unconnected with the happiness or unhappiness of men. If at any time my action involves you in suffering, I perceive it not, save in exceptional instances, just as, in general, if I cause you pleasure or do you good, I know it not; nor do I, as you suppose, produce such results with any thought of you at all. In a

¹ The lustre is equal to five years.

“ . . . fuge suspicari,
cujus octavum trepidavit aetas
claudere lustrum,”—Hor., *Od.* ii. 4.
8

word, if it seemed good to me, or necessary for my ends, entirely to extinguish your species, it would not cause me a scruple.

ICELANDER.

Let us suppose that a man, for his own pleasure, were to invite and press me to come to his house; and that I, to oblige him, went there. Imagine that, on my arrival, he assigned for my occupation a miserable ruinous apartment, damp, noisome, exposed to the wind and rain, and threatening at each moment to collapse and crush me. Figure to yourself further that, far from taking any thought of entertaining me, or providing for my enjoyment, he barely supplied me with what was needful to keep my soul and body together; and in addition to all this, that he caused me to be abused and mocked and beaten by his sons and his servants. Conceive that I complained of such treatment, and that he replied to me: 'Do you suppose that I built this house for you; or that I maintain my sons and my servants for your convenience? No, no, I have other things to think of than ministering to your comfort, or spending my money on your entertainment.' Now to this I should reply: 'Look you, my good friend, granting that you did not build this house for my use, let me remind you that you need not have invited me to it. But seeing that you have of your own free will insisted that I should visit you, surely it is your duty to do what you can to make my stay here at least free from suffering and danger.' Well, I say the same to you. I well know you did not make the world for the convenience of men; on the contrary, it seems evident that you made it expressly in order to torment them. And I would ask you, did I ever request you to put me in this universe, or did I violently intrude

myself into it, against your will? But if you yourself placed me here, of your own free will, and without consulting me, and in such a way that I could not decline or reject the arrangement, is it not incumbent on you to render my condition here moderately comfortable and satisfactory, or at least free from positive suffering and trial? And I say this not only with reference to my own case, but to that of the whole human race, and of all other living creatures.

NATURE.

You seem to overlook the fact that all existence in this universe is a never-ceasing process of production and destruction; two forces so bound together and interdependent that each reacts on the other in maintaining the existence of things; and that any suspension of their action would result in the dissolution of cosmic existence. Hence it is incompatible with the necessity of things that any created object should be superior to suffering and decay.

ICELANDER.

Ay, I have heard this line of reasoning from all our philosophers. But since that which is destroyed necessarily suffers, and since that which destroys has no satisfaction, and in a short time is itself destroyed in turn, I would have you to tell me,—what no philosopher has ever been able to explain,—who derives any pleasure or advantage from this existence of the universe, so abounding in misery, and maintained only by the death and destruction of all the things which compose it?

It is related that while this discussion was proceeding two lions approached, so emaciated and so exhausted by hunger that they had barely sufficient strength to eat up

that Icclander. They did so, however, and extracted from him nourishment enough to keep them alive for the remainder of that day. Others deny this, and assert that while the Icclander was arguing in this fashion, a furious hurricane arose, hurled him to the earth, and piled over his body a superb mausoleum of sand. Beneath this he was shortly dried up and effectually embalmed; and ultimately became a fine mummy, which was subsequently discovered by certain travellers, and deposited in the museum of I know not what city of Europe.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN FREDERICK RUYSCH AND HIS MUMMIES.¹

*Chorus of Mummies in the Laboratory of Frederick Ruysch.*²

OH Death! alone immortal, unto whom
Every created thing must come, in thee
Our disembodied natures now repose;
Joyless indeed, but, at the least, secure
From all the woes of life. Profoundest night
Obscures our torpid and bewildered sense;
All hope and all desire in us are dead,
But so alike is every grief and fear;
While the void æons, gliding slowly by,
Have neither tedium nor charm for us.
We once did live; but now the memory
Of life is paled within us, faint and blurred

¹ The translator is indebted to the courtesy of the editors of the *National Review* for permission here to republish this Dialogue, which, translated by himself, appeared some time ago in that serial.

² See Note 33.

As a child's waking image of some dream,
 Or terrifying phantom of the night.
 What were we—what was that unjoyful state
 Which, living, we called Life—ay, what?
 It looms upon our apprehension now,
 Like some dim problem of mysterious scope,
 Even as Death unto the living looms;
 And even as man's puny senses shrink
 From death while yet he lives, just even so
 Our disembodied natures now recoil
 From the bare thought of life's brief fevered course;
 Joyless, indeed, but now at last assured
 Joy is denied alike to quick and dead.

RUYSCH (*outside his laboratory, peering through the
 chinks of the door*).

Zounds! Who has taught music to these long-dead
 mummies, that they carol thus in the middle of the night,
 like so many cocks? By my faith, I am e'en in a cold
 sweat, and am within an ace of being more dead than they
 are. I little thought I had preserved them from corruption
 only that they might thus revive, and chill my blood. For
 all my vaunted philosophy, I quake from head to foot.
 Curse the foul fiend who ever tempted me to keep such
 horrors in my house! In sooth, I know not what to do.
 If I leave them shut up here, how know I but they may
 burst the door, or issue through the key-hole, and stalk to
 my bedside. As to calling for help for fear of dead corpses,
 I may not think of it. Come, let me pluck up courage,
 and try if I can frighten *them*.

(*He enters the laboratory.*)

How now, my sons! what merry jest is this? Pray bear
 in mind that you are dead. What means this precious

caterwauling? Are ye puffed up because his Majesty the Czar did come to look at you?¹ and think ye that ye are no longer to conform to nature's laws? Sure, 'twas but a jest. Nay, if you have really come to life again, I congratulate you from my heart; only, in that case, I must frankly tell you we must part; for though I could afford to keep you so long as you remained dead, I am not rich enough to feed you as live men; so, you will have to pack. If, indeed, there be such things as vampires, and if ye be of that sort, ye may e'en go and suck somebody else's blood, for, sure, I am not minded to let ye suck mine, though I was willing enough to fill your veins with yonder artificial substitute you wot of.² In one word, then, if ye be content to lie still and hold your peace as heretofore, we'll still be friends, and ye shall lack for nothing reasonable in my poor house; if not, I tell you plain I'll take this door-bolt and pound your new-found life out of you.

MUMMY (*speaks*).

Be not enraged. I vow to you we shall all remain dead as we are, without your pounding us.

RUYSCH.

Well, then, explain this whim which but now possessed ye, to break out into song.

Even now, when midnight tolled, it marked the first of those grand algebraic cycles whereof the ancients wrote, when, for the first time since the universe began, 'tis given to the dead to speak—and not to us alone, but to all the dead—to all, wherever they may lie; in every tomb; deep

¹ See Note 34.

² See Note 35.

in the bottom of the sea ; beneath the snows of the Pole, or the sands of Sahara ; whether stretched beneath the open sky or buried in the bosom of the earth—all, all the dead this midnight chanted with us the hymn you heard but now.

RUYSCH.

Ay, truly? But say, how long will they continue thus to sing or speak?

MUMMY.

Their hymn is ended. Now 'tis their privilege to speak for one sole quarter of a mortal hour. Then must they return to silence till the next of these vast cycles shall arrive.

RUYSCH.

If this be so, I trow ye'll not disturb my rest a second time. Meanwhile, enjoy your short-lived chat, while I stand here aside and listen to you. Fain would I hear your talk. I'll not disturb ye.

MUMMY.

'Tis not permitted unto us to speak, save only in reply to queries from a living man. The uninterrogated dead, when once he has sung yon hymn, is dumb.

RUYSCH.

In sooth, I grieve to hear it, for methinks it would have been a treat to hear your colloquy, had it been in your power to talk to one another.

MUMMY.

Even if it had been so, you would have learnt nothing, for we have nought to speak of.

RUYSCH.

Well then, a thousand questions occur to me which I would ask of you. The time allotted you for speech is short ; come, tell me, as briefly as you may, what were your sensations, bodily and mental, at the point of death ?

MUMMY.

I was not conscious of the point of death.

THE OTHER MUMMIES.

Neither were we.

RUYSCH.

How could you possibly fail to be conscious of it ?

MUMMY.

Just as men fail to note the point when sleep begins.

RUYSCH.

Ay, but then sleep's an ordinary thing.

MUMMY.

And is not death so ? Show us the man, the beast, the plant which doth not die.

RUYSCH.

Well, I no longer marvel to hear you speak or sing, if ye perceived not even when ye died :

Like him who, feeling not the fatal stroke,
Continued fighting when his neck was broke : ¹

¹ “ Così colui, del colpo non accorto,
Andava combattendo, ed era morto.”

as the Italian poet sings. And yet, as touching this affair of death, the like of you *must* know more about it than is known to us who have not yet died. Come now, be plain, did ye not suffer any pain at the point of death?*

MUMMY.

How could I suffer pain when I was not conscious?

RUYSCH.

Well, all men hold that the sensation of death is acutely painful.

MUMMY.

As if there could be any sensation in death, which is the very opposite of sensation!

RUYSCH.

And yet all who have considered the nature of the soul, whether by the light of the Epicurean philosophy, or by that of other systems, concur in my view of this matter, and believe that death is, in its very essence, and beyond all comparison, the most bitter thing conceivable.

MUMMY.

Well, put the following questions from us to your philosophers. If a man cannot perceive the point at which his vital force is but suspended for a time by sleep, or syncope, or some such temporary cause, how should he note the point at which that force is quenched entirely and for ever? Again, how could it be possible that any vivid sensation should be felt at death, which is itself the extinction of the very faculty of sensation; which dulls, and lastly kills the

very power to feel? How could this process of extinction be itself a painful thing? How could it be felt at all? No, when consciousness itself is lulled in dissolution, no bitterness can be. Why, look you, even they who die of painful maladies, when death draws nigh, are seen calm and quiescent, proving that in them the vital power, vanishing at the touch of death, is no more susceptible of pain. Thus pain itself is dead before death comes. Tell this from us to all who think to suffer in the hour of death.

RUYSCH.

Such reasoning as this may suit the Epicureans, but it must fail to satisfy those who hold far other doctrines than theirs as to the nature of the soul; as I have ever done, and shall continue to do all the more firmly, now that I have heard the dead both speak and sing. For, inasmuch as death is the parting of the soul and body, it is impossible to think that these two essences, conjoined and welded into one, and together constituting the individual, can be severed from each other without a dreadful shock and inconceivable agony.

MUMMY.

Say, then, are body and soul linked into one by any nerve or fibrous tissue which must be snapped asunder when the soul takes its flight; or is the soul some actual portion of the body, which then is violently rent away? See you not that the soul quits the body only because it may no longer dwell there—its fleshly tenement is wrecked—and not because of any shock or violence which tears it from its seat. And tell me: think you that when it first finds place within the body—at the time men call birth—think you the soul then feels its entrance into life, or has

any perception of its new attachment to the body? Think you it notes the new-formed union? Why, then, at death should it note the separation from its clay companion, and feel a shock at its departure? Nay, be well assured that even as the entrance into life is gentle and unperceived, so will the parting be.

RUYSCH.

Then what is death, if it be not a pain?

MUMMY.

'Tis rather a pleasure. Know that death, like slumber, comes not in an instant, but by slow and imperceptible gradations. True, these gradations vary with the variety of the causes which occasion death, but when it comes, death, like sleep, brings neither pain nor pleasure, but unconsciousness alone. Before it comes, it steeps the senses in a lethargy which blunts all consciousness and dulls all pain. But the lethargy which dulls all pain is itself a pleasure; and therefore I say that the approach of death is even pleasurable. Surely the best and truest part of what men call pleasure consists in freedom from pain; and thus, as death draws nigh, if we feel aught, 'tis pleasure that we feel. For me, although in my last hour I paid small heed to my sensations, since my physician counselled calm, yet I bethink me that the sense I felt was not unlike the pleasant languor of approaching sleep.

THE OTHER MUMMIES.

Such, too, was what we felt.

RUYSCH.

Be it as you say; though all with whom I have discussed

the theme have taken a far other view of it; but they, 'tis true, did not, like you, speak from their own experience. But now tell me, in the hour of death, while you felt that pleasant sort of languor you describe, did you realise that you were dying; knew you that it was death which approached; or had you some other thought?

1.
e MUMMY.

Till I was actually dead I never felt clearly persuaded that I was actually dying; and while I retained the faculty of thought, it seemed to me that I might yet live, were it only an hour or two; and such, methinks, is the common phantasy of dying men.

THE OTHER MUMMIES.

Such was our phantasy.

RUYSCH.

Ay, even as Cicero has said, that ne'er a man, however aged and infirm he may be, but hopes to live another year.¹ But at the very last,—when all was over,—when the spirit had departed,—when you were dead,—how did you know it; what did you feel, what was your first sensation? Tell me your experience *then*.

Ha! no reply! My sons, do ye not hear me? Speak!—Ah no! Their lips are sealed. The destined quarter of an hour is past. Let me examine them. Ay, they have gone dead again, sure enough—stone dead, stone dead. Well, there's no fear of their giving me another fright. Let me again to bed.

¹ Cicero, *De Senect.*, cap. 7.

MEMORABILIA OF FILIPPO OTTONIERI.

I.

I propose to record some of the notable reflections of Filippo Ottonieri,¹ partly as I heard them from his own lips, and partly as they have been related by others. He was born at Nubiana, in the province of Valdivento, where he resided the greater part of his life, where he died not long ago, and where there is no record of his ever having done any injury to any person, by word or deed. Notwithstanding this, he was hated by the majority of his fellow-citizens, merely, as it would seem, because he took little pleasure in those things which are wont to be desired and sought after by ordinary men, although he never visited with contempt or censure those who prized and pursued them more than he himself did.

The truth is, that he was, not only in theory but in practice, that which many of his contemporaries professed to be—a philosopher. For this reason he was regarded as an eccentric, although he never sought or affected to appear different in any respect from the vulgar. Nay, on this subject he used to say that the greatest eccentricity which in our day could be found, whether in the manners or the actions of men, when compared with that observable among the ancients, would be seen to be far less marked than the latter; and although it may appear considerable in these days, it would have seemed trivial to our ancestors. In illustration of which he would take the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and observe that though the peculiarity of his principles and habits seemed to our grandfathers very striking, yet if we

¹ A fictitious character.

contrast them with those of Democritus, and the early cynic philosophers, they would appear comparatively trifling; and it would be plain that if any man were to live and act at the present day as these ancient Greeks did, he would be regarded, not merely as an ultra-eccentric, but as one dwelling almost outside the domain of human society. He was even of opinion that the standard of civilisation prevailing in any given place or period could be pretty accurately ascertained by a consideration of the degree of abnormal singularity capable of co-subsisting with the general manners of that time or locality.

Most temperate in all his habits, he yet was wont to profess himself an Epicurean, though he did so probably more in jest than earnest. For he condemned the principles of Epicurus, asserting that in the time of that philosopher much more delight was to be drawn from the pursuit of virtue and true glory than from indulgence in ease, indifferentism, and sensual gratification, which Epicurus reputed to be the greatest boons attainable by man. Nay, he held that the Epicurean philosophy, however adapted it might be to the degeneracy of modern days, was totally alien to the spirit of antiquity.

In the matter of philosophy he loved to describe himself as a Socratic; and, like Socrates, he would frequently pass a great part of the day in philosophic discussion with his intimates on whatever topic might present itself. But, unlike Socrates, he refrained from frequenting the shops of the cobblers, carpenters, and blacksmiths of his native town, being of opinion that though the artisans of Athens may have had sufficient leisure for philosophic trifling, those of Nubiana, if they were to indulge in such a luxury, would assuredly perish of hunger.

Neither did he in his method of reasoning imitate Socrates

in perpetually propounding questions and drawing conclusions; for he used to say that although the moderns were undoubtedly more patient than the ancients, yet at the present day it would be impossible to find anybody capable of enduring a thousand continuous interrogations, or of attending to a hundred wearisome inferences.

In point of fact, all he had of Socrates was his occasional vein of irony and simulated exaggeration. He used to explain the origin and motive of the famous irony of Socrates somewhat in the following terms.—Socrates, he said, had a disposition naturally tender and prone to love; but being painfully conscious of his personal defects, it is probable that even from his childhood he despaired of ever being loved with any other love than that of friendship, a thing little capable of satisfying a heart at once susceptible and ardent, and apt to cherish towards others a sentiment far more sweet and vivid. Again, although he was not wanting in the fortitude which is founded on reason, it does not appear that he was abundantly gifted with personal courage and the other qualities which in those times of war and commotion, and in the licence then prevailing among the Athenians, were indispensable to any man who aimed at taking an active part in public affairs. Added to this, his uncouth and ridiculous person would have seriously prejudiced him amid a people who drew little distinction between beauty and worth, and who were moreover much addicted to raillery. Accordingly, in a city free and full of the stir of the passions, engrossed in business or pastime, and brilliant with wealth and its accessories, Socrates found himself poor, unsuited for love, and ill adapted for public affairs, and at the same time gifted with a commanding intellect, a gift calculated to accentuate the drawbacks of his position. Under these circumstances he employed his

enforced leisure in subtle philosophic discourses on the actions and customs and characteristics of his fellow-citizens; and being excluded from all active participation in the activities and enjoyments of life, it was only natural that these discourses should be tinged with a peculiar tone of irony. Nevertheless, the gentleness and magnanimity of his disposition, coupled with the growing celebrity which his lectures procured for him, and which could not fail to prove soothing to his self-esteem, had the effect of preventing his irony from being contemptuous or bitter, and made it ever moderate and kindly.

In this way philosophy, which according to Cicero originally descended from heaven, was introduced by Socrates into the city and the homes of men; and, abandoning the vain speculations on the *arcana* of things, with which it had till then been concerned, it was directed to the consideration of the manners and lives of mankind, and was employed in discussions touching virtue and vice, the useful and the beautiful, and their opposites.

But it should be observed that originally Socrates had no fixed design of introducing this innovation, or of inculcating any special doctrines; nor did he even aim at the title of a philosopher, a title which, as it was at that time bestowed only on the professors of physical or metaphysical science, he could scarcely have hoped to attain by his discourses. He even went so far as to profess that he possessed no special knowledge, and that he had no other object in view than to entertain himself by the discussion of human affairs and current topics, preferring such a pastime to philosophy itself, and to all other sciences and arts. The fact is, that his natural temperament impelled him to action much more than to speculation, and that he had recourse to these public discussions solely on account of the obstacles which

debarred him from an active career. In his lectures or conversations he always preferred to address the young and the beautiful, thereby, perhaps, indulging his natural proclivities, and drawing consolation from the esteem of those by whom he would far rather have been loved.

And inasmuch as all the schools of Greek thought which subsequently arose were more or less founded on that of Socrates, Ottonieri used to assert that almost the whole body of ancient philosophy, and consequently of the modern systems which sprung from it, drew their origin from the snub nose and satyr-like features of that acute and warm-hearted little citizen of ancient Athens. Nay, he would add that the writings of the Socratic school were so stamped with the individuality of its founder as to remind one of those masks, which although in various comedies they may differ more or less, all had the same name and cast and general similitude.

Ottonieri left behind him no philosophical or other treatises calculated for the perusal of the public. When some of his friends asked him why he had never undertaken to philosophise in writing as well as in conversation, and had never put his thoughts on paper, he replied that reading was a sort of conversation between the writer and the reader, and that just as at feasts and public entertainments, those who take no part in the proceedings soon grow weary of them, so in conversation most men would rather talk than listen. But books, he said, resembled those persons who, in their intercourse with their friends, are perpetually talking and never listening. Therefore it behoved that they should express beautiful thoughts, and express them well; failing which conditions, a book is as odious a thing as an incessant and insatiable talker.

II.

Ottonieri never would admit that there was any essential difference between business and pleasure ; and he asserted that whenever he was engaged in any occupation, no matter what, and no matter how serious its nature might be, he was pleasurably affected. But if at any time, or for any brief interval, he happened to be unoccupied, he was afflicted with tedium.

He used to say that the liveliest pleasures life can afford are those which spring from illusions, and that for this reason children found everything in nothing ; while men found nothing in everything. As to those pleasures commonly called real, he was wont to compare them to an artichoke, in order to reach the core of which it was necessary first to eat up all the leaves ; and he added that even such artichokes were very rare ; since many are found similar to them in outward appearance, but destitute of all core ; and that, for his part, having no mind in any case to swallow the leaves, he was content to abstain from both varieties.

Being asked by some one what he regarded as the most intolerable moments of existence, he replied that, except those of actual pain or fear, he considered that the least desirable periods of life were those of so-called pleasure, since the remembrance of such periods in the past, and the anticipation of their recurrence in future, two sentiments which fill the bulk of our lives, are infinitely more intense and more sweet than the pleasures themselves.

He was also wont to compare human pleasures to perfumes, which leave behind them a pleasing recollection out of all proportion to the pleasure they afford when present to our senses ; and he was of opinion that, of all our senses, that

of smell was the least capable of being cloyed by gratification. He also likened perfumes to our hopes of happiness; arguing that in the case of such objects as are savoury to the taste, and at the same time sweet to the smell, the latter property usually exceeds and outlives the former; since when eaten their flavour is seldom found equal to their odour, or realises the expectation of them which we had formed from their smell. And he used to relate how at times he felt the utmost impatience for the attainment of some object of his desires, although he was sure of realising it: and this, not from avidity to possess it, but from fear that he might diminish the enjoyment of it when attained, by forming exaggerated ideas of the pleasure it was likely to yield; and that on such occasions he was, for this reason, as studious to avoid the thought of it as he would be to shun the thought of an impending disaster.

He used to say that each one of us from the commencement of his existence resembles a man who is stretched on a hard and uneasy couch. Failing to secure rest, he keeps tossing and turning about, first on one side then on the other, and constantly changing his position. Thus he passes the greater part of the night, ever hoping to get a little rest, and sometimes even fancying that he is just about to drop off asleep; till morning comes, when, totally unrested, he has to get up.

Once, in company with some friends, he was watching some bees engaged in their toils, when he exclaimed, 'Happy are ye, if you know not your own unhappiness.'

He thought it was impossible to number the woes of mankind, or sufficiently to deplore a single one of them.

Alluding to the well-known question of Horace, how it was that no man is ever content with his own condition, he used to say the reason for this was because no human

condition is happy. Princes and their subjects, the poor as well as the rich, the strong and the weak alike, if happy, would be content, and would have no envy of the lot of others; for men are no more incapable of contentment than other animals are, but they cannot be content without happiness; and being denied that, it is no wonder that they are dissatisfied.

He used to say that if a man could find himself in the most fortunate condition conceivable on this planet, but denied all hope of its amelioration, he would probably be supremely unhappy. For all men, even the most aged, continually cherish hopes of some improvement in their circumstances. And in this connection he used to cite a passage in Xenophon,¹ where he advises all people minded to buy land, always to buy that which is badly cultivated; because an estate which is not likely to yield any more produce in the future than it does at the time of its purchase, is not likely to prove as satisfactory as one which is capable of being improved, and yielding better and better crops. Thus all possessions and conditions which hold out a prospect of improvement are the most calculated to yield us satisfaction.

On the other hand, he used to observe that no condition is so miserable but that it may become worse, and that no man, however wretched he may be, can ever console himself with the thought that he has touched the bottom and bed-rock of adversity. For although there are no limits to hope, the joys attainable by man are strictly limited; and in point of fact, if we weigh the circumstances of each condition of men, with due consideration of their habits and desires, we shall find that the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, generally enjoy nearly the same

¹ *Econom.* xx. 25.

measure of happiness. But nature has assigned no limits to the evils which threaten us; and imagination itself can scarcely conceive any calamity to which our race is not, or has not been, or may not in the future be exposed. From this it results that whereas the majority of mankind have no ground to hope for any improvement in their condition, not one of them is at any time free from substantial grounds for fear; and if fortune is frequently powerless to benefit us, she never loses the power to afflict us with fresh sufferings sufficient to overcome and shatter the resolution of despair itself.

He used often to laugh at those philosophers who pretend that a man can withdraw himself from the caprices of fortune by despising all benefits which he cannot attain, and all evils which he is powerless to shun, and by referring his happiness or its reverse to those things alone which depend upon himself, and are under his own control. Touching this theory, he used to say that even if there ever was a man who regulated his conduct towards his fellows as a true and perfect philosopher, yet no man ever did so in his dealings with himself; and that it is just as impossible to restrict our attention to the contemplation of our own circumstances, excluding all consideration of those of others, as it is to regard the latter as if they were our own.

But even if we grant that the mental attitude enjoined by these philosophers were possible—which it is not—and were attainable by any one of us, and this in even a more perfect degree than they indicate, and were confirmed and ingrained in that person by long practice, and proved by many trials, is it to be supposed that the happiness or unhappiness of that person would cease to be dependent on circumstances? Would not that mental attitude itself,

instead of being independent of circumstances, be continually affected by them? Is not human reason itself daily exposed to infinite accidents, and countless maladies involving stupidity, delirium, frenzy, folly, and other disturbances of the mind, temporary or permanent; any one of which may at any time overthrow its vaunted stoical indifference? Memory itself, the treasurer of knowledge, is perpetually declining as our years advance. In old age how many men become children again, while all lose much of the vigour of the intellect. Similarly, even while the intellectual powers are unimpaired, bodily disorders may at any time shake our resolution and extinguish our fortitude.

In fine, if we confess, as we must, that our frames are subject to influences beyond our control, it is mere folly to pretend that our minds, which are so dependent on our bodies, are subject to no influences external to ourselves. He would conclude by observing that man is absolutely, and always, and inevitably, within the power and at the mercy of fortune and circumstance. When asked for what reason men were born, he would jokingly reply that the purpose of their birth probably was to show them how much better it would have been not to have been born.

III.

Referring to a certain bereavement which he had suffered, Ottonieri observed that the loss of one whom we love, by means of some sudden accident, or of a brief and rapid illness, is not so bitter as it is to see him pine and waste away by degrees—which had been the case in this instance—and gradually succumb to a prolonged malady, by the effects of which, prior to his decease, he has become totally changed in mind and body, and reduced to a con-

dition wholly unlike his former self. This, he said, is a very bitter thing; for in such a case, the loved one does not depart leaving in your mind the cherished image of his former and better self, but one totally different from that whose memory was so dear to you, and thus all the sweet illusions of affection are rudely chased from your mind; and when you lose your friend for ever, your former impressions of him are blotted out by this mournful substitute. Thus your friend is lost to you entirely, and is not permitted to survive even in your imagination; while memory, instead of ministering to you any consolation, presents to you nothing but material for grief. In fine, bereavements like this leave behind them no grain of comfort for the sorrow which they cause.

Once when a certain man was bewailing some misfortune, and protesting that if he could but find a remedy for it, he could easily endure all his other trials, Ottonieri replied that, in that case, his other trials which now seemed light by comparison, would grow in gravity.

When another said of some trouble that had it continued longer it would have become insupportable; he replied that on the contrary in that case use would have rendered it more endurable.

On many other subjects, too, relating to the condition of men, he was wont to differ, not only from the judgment of the vulgar, but sometimes even from that of the learned. Thus, for example, whereas some hold that in presenting a petition or making a request, the petitioner ought to select for this purpose some moment when the person to be petitioned is in an unusual state of satisfaction; he was of the contrary opinion, and maintained that, save in cases where the request can be granted on the spot, abnormal satisfaction or unusual depression in the person petitioned

are conditions alike unfavourable for the attainment of the thing desired. Both these sentiments, he said, are apt to fill a man with the consideration of himself to such a degree that they leave no room for the thought of others; since in grief, the thought of our misfortune, and in joy, the idea of our good fortune, occupy our minds to the exclusion of all concern for the needs or desires of others. Both conditions were in his opinion peculiarly unfavourable to the conception of pity—grief, because then a man is wholly given up to pity for himself; joy, because it bathes all things in its own serene atmosphere, and grief and misfortune then appear impossible conceptions; and the very thought of them is repugnant to the mind as being too antagonistic to its existing attitude.

In his opinion the condition best calculated to move a man to act, or to resolve to act, for the benefit of another, is one of tranquil and moderate contentment, not too excessive or too vivid; and if joyful, it should be a joyfulness not springing from any special or definite accident, but from a general and pervading calm of the spirit, free from all distracting influences. In such a frame of mind men are peculiarly accessible to compassion, and compliant to entreaty, and willingly embrace the occasion to gratify others, and to crystallise into philanthropic action that general benevolence which pervades the mind.

Similarly he denied that the unhappy, when dwelling on their woes, obtained more sympathy from persons afflicted like themselves, than from others. On the contrary, such persons, in listening to such complaints or in contemplating the condition of other sufferers, are usually engrossed with their own misfortunes, which to them appear still greater than those of others; and it frequently happens that while you imagine them to be moved by your pitiful tale, they will

interrupt you with a narrative of their own griefs, and try to convince you that these are more intolerable than yours.

Indeed he was wont to say that such cases too commonly remind us of the interview between Priam and Achilles mentioned in Homer,¹ in which the former, stretched at the latter's feet, suppliant and weeping, pours out his doleful lament, whereupon Achilles too bursts into tears, not in sympathy with the old king, but at the thought of his own bereavements, and the memory of his dead father and his slaughtered friend Patroclus. He would add that a past experience of the griefs which afflict others may indeed somewhat move us to compassion for them; but not so the simultaneous endurance of them.

He used to say that thoughtlessness and want of reflection often lead to the commission of actions positively cruel, and thus are often confounded with cruelty itself; as, for example, when one engaged abroad in some amusement leaves his domestics to be drenched by the rain in an uncovered place; and this, not from deliberate unkindness, but from want of thought, and want of imagination to enable him to realise their discomfort; and he was of opinion that mere thoughtlessness was much more common than malignity and positive inhumanity. Want of reflection alone, he thought, was the origin of many reprehensible actions; and he held that a large part of the conduct of men, usually ascribed to downright depravity, is due to want of consideration alone.

On one occasion he said that a benefactor would much rather encounter positive ingratitude than see himself repaid for a great benefit by a small one, whereby the object of his benevolence foolishly or dishonestly professes or pretends to release himself from the weight of obligation.

¹ *Iliad* xxiv. 509 sqq.

For in such a case the benefactor is made to appear as if he had been fully compensated; and mere politeness compels him to admit as much. Thus he is defrauded alike of the barren satisfaction of gratitude, and of the privilege of complaining of ingratitude, and cannot even pretend to have been wronged.

The following opinion also I have heard ascribed to him. We are all prone to presuppose in our acquaintances great acuteness in discovering our merits, real or supposed. We imagine that they fully recognise our graces of speech and action; are profoundly impressed by them, meditate on their charm, and are continually thinking of them. And yet we never find ourselves discovering such fine qualities in them—or, if we do, we say nothing about it.

IV.

He used to note that sometimes irresolute men are most tenacious of purpose in the teeth of all difficulties, and that this arose from their very want of resolution; since it is obvious that the abandonment of a resolution once formed must involve the adoption of another in its stead. Such persons are sometimes also observed to be singularly prompt and energetic in carrying out any design they have once formed, because they are in perpetual fear of abandoning their resolution, and sinking back into all the doubts and vacillations which had tormented them before they formed it. For this reason they hasten on the execution of it with the greatest determination of which they are capable; spurred by fear of their own indecision more than they are attracted by the inherent advantages of the course they have undertaken, or deterred by the obstacles to its attainment.

He would also say with a smile that persons who are

perpetually communicating their sentiments to others will even when alone cry out if so much as a fly tickles them, or if they upset or let fall a cup; while a man who is accustomed to solitude and self-restraint would not utter a word though he had a stroke of apoplexy, if it overtook him in the company of others.

He held that the majority of the men, whether ancient or modern, who have achieved remarkable reputation, have done so chiefly in consequence of the predominance in their character of some one particular gift over the others which they possessed, and that a man in whom all the intellectual faculties were equally proportioned and balanced, would, even if such faculties were in themselves great, find difficulty in producing great things, and would probably not appear a great figure either to his contemporaries or to posterity.

Among the moderns he distinguished three sorts of characters. First, those in whom what we call human nature has been modified and transformed by the influence of art, and the usages of life in cities. This class comprised all those who were most adapted for private or public affairs, and best suited to participate with pleasure in the polite intercourse of society, to mingle gracefully with their acquaintances, and to take an active part in civil life as now prevailing. And this class, speaking generally, usually obtained the greatest share of public esteem.

The second class was composed of persons whose temperament was in a less degree influenced by civilisation, either from deficiency of culture, or because their inherent defects rendered them impervious to the effects of art, custom, and example. This class was the most numerous of the three; it was held in more or less contempt by the others, if not by themselves as well; and was considered worthy

of little consideration. In a word, it consisted of those persons who are described as the vulgar, or who deserve that title, whatever may be their fortune or circumstances.

The third class, infinitely less numerous than the other two, and nearly as much despised as those last mentioned, if not even more so, was formed of those persons whose natures were so robust or so high-strung as to resist the influences of modern life, to exclude or reject them, or at all events to be affected by them to so slight a degree that they are disqualified alike for affairs and for social intercourse, and are rarely appreciated or esteemed.

He subdivided this last class into two species; those who were so strong-minded that they contemned the contempt which was evinced towards them, and often even preferred such contempt to applause. These differed from other men not only by the necessity of their temperament, but by preference and choice. Indifferent to the hopes which inspire mankind at large, scorning their pleasures and despising their pursuits, they remain solitary in the crowd of the city, shunning all, and shunned by all. Men of this stamp, he said, were indeed very rare.

As to the other subdivision of this class, he said their force of character was strangely blended with a sort of weakness and timidity, so that they were ever in conflict with themselves. These were not by preference aliens to society; on the contrary, they desired to conform themselves in most things to the sentiments of the first of these classes. They inwardly lamented the disfavour in which they were held, and smarted under the hardship of being looked down upon by men whom they knew to be infinitely inferior to themselves in intellect and character. And yet, in spite of all their efforts, they never succeeded in adapting themselves to the ways of life, or in rendering them-

selves acceptable to their fellow-men. In this sub-division we must class, though in varying position and degree, not a few of the finest intellects of recent and present times.

As signal instances of this, he would cite the cases of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in modern times, and of Virgil among the ancients. Donatus Grammaticus, in his Latin life of the latter, states, on the authority of Melissus the freedman of Mæcenæ, that he was dull and tedious in his conversation, and little more brilliant than an uneducated man. His biographer adds that this is confirmed by a consideration of the artificial subtlety of his style, and the whole genius of his poetry, which seem to show that the very refinement of his intellect unfitted him for ordinary human intercourse. And this is especially apparent from a passage which occurs towards the end of his Second Georgic, where, unlike other gifted Romans of his time, he expresses a yearning for a life of obscurity and solitude, and does so in a tone which seems to prove that he was not so much inclined by preference to such a life, as impelled to it by the peculiarity of his temperament, and that he longs for it not on account of its intrinsic desirability, but as a refuge from the world.

Seeing then that the men who compose both varieties of this class, saving a few of them after death, are generally held in little esteem, and that those of the second class are held in no esteem, living or dead, he thought it might be laid down as a general principle, that in our day the esteem of mankind is not to be attained but by departing more or less from our congenital disposition, and undergoing a certain transformation in our natural habits. Besides which, seeing that in our time nearly the whole of civil society is drawn from the first of these classes, which forms a sort of mean between the other two,

he came to the conclusion from this and many other circumstances, that at the present day the control and supervision of human affairs is almost entirely in the hands of mediocrity.

He likewise distinguished three conditions of old age, considered in comparison with the other ages of mankind.

When the world was young, when the customs and habits of men were just and virtuous, and when social intercourse did not necessarily alienate men's minds from honesty and rectitude, old age was venerated more than any other period of life, inasmuch as to the virtues then prevailing it added a degree of wisdom and prudence exceeding that of younger men.

In course of time, however, when manners became perverted and corrupt, old age became the vilest and most contemptible period of life. The oldest men were simply the most depraved, by reason of their long traffic with evil, their greater contamination with the prevailing corruption, and the coldness of heart engendered by age. At the same time, being impotent to injure others in any more active way, they were compelled to resort to calumny, fraud, perfidy, cunning and dissimulation, and all the most abject arts of the base.

But later still, when the corruption of manners went beyond all bounds, and men despised virtue even before they had experience of the deplorable consequences of vice, when they became even in youth graduates and past masters in evil, the old became by comparison, I will not say venerable, since few things then merited such a title, but more endurable than the young. In this stage of society the very ardour and bodily vigour of youth, which had formerly sometimes given rise to virtuous sentiments and actions, now served only as the incentives to evil and the ministers of vice, which thus became endued, so to say, with the

vigour and vivacity of youth ; whereas in the decline of life the propensity to evil was dulled by the chilling influence of old age, and the decay of the bodily powers—causes which in themselves too often conduce more to turpitude than to nobility of character. Finally, increasing experience of life and clearer perception of the worthlessness and baseness of all human things, instead of corrupting even the comparatively good as it previously had done, now began to operate among the aged to diminish the love of evil even in those of them who were bad.

Hence, regarding old age, as compared with youth and maturity, it may be said that in early times it occupied the same relation as that of the better to the good ; in corrupt times it was as the worst is to the bad ; and in the succeeding and still more corrupt periods of society, as the bad is to that which is worse.

V.

Ottonieri often discoursed on that species of self-love which in these times is called egoism, a habit of mind which I am disposed to think only too often provoked his animadversion. I shall relate one or two of his utterances on this point. He used to say that nowadays when any person is praised or blamed for probity or the reverse, by one who has had dealings with that person, the only information to be gathered from such praise or blame is that the object of it has commended himself to the self-love of the speaker, or has not done so ; if he has, he is called a good man ; if he has not, he is set down as a knave.

He used to say that in these days it was simply impossible for any person to love another without a rival ; and when asked why he said so, he would reply, because assuredly the person loved is a formidable rival of the lover.

Let us assume, he would say, that you asked a favour of any given person, and that that person could not grant it without incurring the displeasure or the hatred of a third person. Let us further suppose that this third person, and the person of whom you had requested the favour, and yourself, are all equal more or less in position and in resources. I assert that the favour will not be granted to you, notwithstanding that its concession would have laid you under great obligations to your friend, and would have increased your esteem for him even more than it could have incensed the third party. For men commonly fear much more from the hostility and anger of their fellows than they hope to benefit from their love or gratitude. And this is but natural, since experience shows that the former of these sentiments operate more frequently and more actively than the latter do. The reason of this is, that when a man seeks to injure his enemy or to be avenged on another, he is directly pursuing his own ends; whereas he who merely seeks to gratify a friend or to requite a favour received, acts only in the interests of another.

He used to say that attentions and services which are rendered to others with the intention and hope of reaping advantage from them, rarely produce such a result; since men, especially in these days of enlightenment, are willing enough to receive benefits, but reluctant to return them. At the same time courtesies of this kind practised by the young towards rich or influential old people, frequently if not generally do bear fruit.

I remember to have heard him let fall the following considerations touching modern customs. He used to say that nowadays men of the world were ashamed of nothing except of being ashamed of anything; nor did they ever blush, if they were capable of blushing at all, for any other cause.

Wonderful is the power of fashion; for while men and nations are singularly tenacious of custom in all matters lying beyond her province, and doggedly obstinate in judging and acting in conformity with established usage, even when it is inconsistent with reason or their obvious advantage, fashion can in a moment cause them to lay aside or vary customs and observances, however reasonable and useful they may be, and to embrace in their stead others of the very opposite character.

There are many things in human life, or in the lives of individuals, which are essentially ridiculous, and yet are rarely ridiculed; or if perchance a man may smile at their absurdity, he soon perceives that his merriment is not shared by others, and he refrains from its indulgence. On the other hand, countless things of the gravest character and in themselves most highly commendable, are daily derided, and he who laughs at them finds plenty of others ready to laugh with him. In fact, most of those things which men most commonly laugh at, have nothing ridiculous about them, and many of them provoke mirth just because they are not fit subjects for it.

We constantly utter and hear such expressions as the following:—*The good old times—our worthy ancestors—or, so-and-so is a man of the rare old stamp*, meaning by this latter, an honest man, and one to be trusted. On the one hand, each generation imagines that its predecessors were superior to themselves; and yet, on the other, they continually assert that mankind is ever advancing and improving, and that if they were to go back to their former condition they would deteriorate—a strange contradiction!

It is certain that the true is not necessarily the beautiful. Nevertheless the true is often capable of yielding delight; and though in human affairs, the beautiful is commonly

preferred to the true, yet even where it is incompatible with the former, the latter is to be preferred to all other things. But in great cities we are ever far removed from the beautiful, since it is now banished from the stir of human life. There, too, we are necessarily far removed from the true, since in great cities all things are false and vain, so much so that in them it may be said that all we see, or hear, or touch, nay, that the very atmosphere we breathe, is false,—a hateful and odious falsity. Now, to high-strung temperaments this is the greatest misery that can be conceived.

They who are not under the necessity of providing for their own wants, and who leave this care to others, are generally incapable of providing for what may be regarded as the most pressing need which besets them. I refer to the need of occupying their vacant moments, which exceeds the necessity of providing for the material wants of life; nay, it exceeds in importance life itself. For mere life, when divorced from happiness, is neither necessary nor desirable. Hence, assuming that we must live, it is of paramount importance that our lives should be passed with the least possible unhappiness. But an unoccupied and aimless life is necessarily unhappy; and the occupation which most conduces to diminish the tedium of existence is that of providing for our needs.

He used to say that the custom of selling and buying human beings was a thing useful to mankind. In illustration of which he said that the practice of inoculation for the small-pox, which was introduced throughout Europe from Constantinople, originally came from Circassia, in which country that disease had been found so destructive of the beauty of its inhabitants, that it seriously interfered with the sale of their young women.

He would say of himself that when he first left school

and entered the world, being young and inexperienced, but devoted to the truth, he laid down a resolution that he would not praise any person or thing he met, unless he was first convinced that such person or thing was truly deserving of praise. He adhered to this resolution for a year, during which time he found nothing to praise. Then, fearing that want of practice might cause him to forget all the eulogistic arts he had just learned in the school of rhetoric, he broke his resolution, and soon after abandoned it entirely.

VI.

It was his custom to get an attendant to read aloud to him some book or treatise, generally by one of the ancient writers; and during the reading he would now and then put in a remark of his own, a sort of running commentary, on any passage which struck him. Thus, one day he was listening to a chapter in the *Lives of the Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius,¹ where it is written that Chilo being asked wherein the learned differed from the ignorant, replied: 'in the happy expectations of the former.' On this Ottonieri observed, 'In the present day the case is inverted; for now it is only fools who hope; the wise never do so.'

Similarly, as they read to him from the same work a passage in which it was stated that Socrates affirmed that in this world there was but one good thing, to wit, knowledge, and but one evil, namely ignorance;² he said, 'Well, I do not know how it may have been with knowledge and ignorance in the time of Socrates, but at the present day I should be inclined to invert the statement.'

In the same book one day they came upon the following

¹ Book i., cap. 69.

² Book ii., cap. 21.

dogma of the followers of Hegesias:¹ "The wise man, whatever he does, will always aim at his own advantage." Whereupon Ottonieri said: 'If all who act thus in the present day are to be regarded as philosophers, then Plato may come as soon as he likes, and establish his republic throughout the civilised world.'

He greatly commended a sentiment of Bion of Borysthenes, which is cited in the same work by Laertius,² to the effect that the most afflicted of men are they who most ardently pursue happiness. To this he added that, conversely, the happiest men are they who are content with the fewest delights, and even with those which are past, by ruminating on them in memory.

He used to apply to the various ages of the world the Greek line which signifies: "The young act; the middle-aged deliberate; the aged desire;" and he would say that in the present day all people, of all ages, do nothing but desire.

One day he was listening to a passage in Plutarch,³ which ran to the following effect: "Bitterly did the Spartans resent the mockery of Stratocles, who after the battle of Cheronæa persuaded the Athenians to offer up sacrifice as for a victory, and subsequently, when they learned that they had been defeated, they were indignant with him. To this he replied: 'What injury have you received from me? You ought rather to be grateful to me for having made you happy for the space of three days.'" To this Ottonieri added that a similar reply might well be made to those who rail against Nature, complaining that she as far as possible keeps the truth concealed from men, or veiled under vain and delightful illusions. What injury, he would

¹ Book ii., cap. 95.

² Book iv., cap. 48.

³ *Præcept. gerend. reipub.*, vol. ii. p. 799.

say, does she thus do to us, and why should we reproach her for keeping us happy for three or four days? And on another occasion he said that, having regard to the delusions and errors of men, we might apply to the whole species that which was said by Tasso of a child which was induced by a kindly deception to take its medicine,—that the deception saved its life.

In the Paradoxes of Cicero¹ they once read to him a passage which might be translated as follows: "Do pleasures then make a man better or more praiseworthy? or do we ever meet with a man who exalts himself, or exults, because he has experienced them?" On this he exclaimed, 'My dear Cicero, whether the moderns become better or more commendable from the pleasures they indulge in, I will not venture to say; but that such pleasures win them applause from their fellow-men, I assert without hesitation. Nay, I would have you to know that nowadays the sole path which youth pursues for the attainment of such applause is the path of pleasure. And they not only boast of their pleasures when attained, and indulge in infinite chatter on the subject with friends and strangers alike, but in addition to this, many of their indulgences are desired and pursued by them, not so much as pleasures, but as means towards the attainment of credit and reputation, and as a topic for self-glorification. And indeed they often take credit for many delights which they have never grasped or even pursued, and which, in a word, are purely fictitious and imaginary.'

In Arrian's history of the expeditions of Alexander the Great,² he noted that at the battle of Issus, Darius posted his Greek mercenaries in the van of his army, while Alexander stationed his Grecian mercenary troops at the

¹ *Parad. ii., sub. fin.*

² Vol. II., viii. 9.

wings or flanks of his line ; and he was of opinion that the result of the action might have been predicted from this disposition alone.

He did not censure those writers who wrote much about themselves ; on the contrary he approved of this practice ; because, as he said, on this topic they are generally very eloquent, and in treating it their style is usually vigorous and elegant beyond that of their age and nation, or even of themselves when discussing other subjects. And this, he thought, was not to be wondered at, since they who write about their own affairs are keenly interested and filled with their subject, and never lack ideas and emotions, since these always well up in abundance from the very theme they are treating, instead of being far-fetched or drawn from other sources, trite and common in their character. Writers on such a subject, moreover, abstain from frivolous and irrelevant ornament, from false and meretricious graces, from all matter abounding in show more than in substance, as well as from affectation and all that is untrue to nature. He considered it a mistake to think that readers care little for what writers compose regarding themselves, since all such matter is calculated to engage the attention and to have a telling effect, provided it be truthfully thought out and felt by the writer, and expressed in a natural and becoming manner. Then again, men can never describe or discuss matters touching others with the same accuracy and vividness as those which concern themselves ; for though men resemble each other more or less in their dispositions and in the accidents of their lives, yet human affairs, contemplated through the medium of our own experience, are seen much more clearly and vividly than as viewed in the experiences of others. In corroboration of this theory, he adduced, among other instances, the speech of Demos-

thenes on behalf of the Crown, in which the orator, speaking constantly of himself, surpasses himself in eloquence. And the same thing is to be observed in the case of Cicero, whenever he treats of matters affecting himself. Notably so in his defence of Milo, a marvellous performance from first to last, but most marvellous towards its peroration, when the orator introduces himself. Then again, among the addresses of Bossuet, the most beautiful and eloquent is that in which, in winding up the praises of the Prince of Condé, the orator touches on his own advanced age and approaching death. While among the writings of the Emperor Julian, for the most part sophistical and often intolerable, the most judicious and commendable is that which bears the title of the *Misopogone*—or a treatise against beards—in which he defends himself from the taunts and calumnies of the people of Antioch. In this opusculè, to say nothing of its other merits, he is not much inferior to Lucian, either in humorous grace or in general richness, acuteness, and vigorous Attic salt; whereas in his treatise on the Cæsars, where he palpably imitates Lucian, he is destitute of grace, poor in his wit, feeble and positively imbecile. Among the Italians, again, who are so poor in eloquent writers, the Apology which Lorenzo dei Medici wrote in his own justification against his detractors, is a model of noble and consummate eloquence. And Torquato Tasso is often eloquent in his prose writings where he speaks of himself, and eminently so in his letters, where it may be said he discusses nothing but his own affairs.

VII.

Many other sayings and ingenious replies of Ottonieri are still remembered; such as that which he uttered to a

young man very studious of letters, but little versed in the world, who once asserted that as to the art of self-conduct in society and practical knowledge of men, one could learn a hundred pages of it every day—‘Ay,’ said Ottonieri, ‘but the volume consists of five millions of leaves.’

There was another rash and foolish youth who when his friends would reprehend his daily escapades and point out ~~the~~ contempt he was incurring, used to mock them, saying that life was no better than a comedy. To him one day Ottonieri said, ‘Be it so, but even in a comedy it is better to be applauded than hissed, and the comedian who is badly instructed in his art or inexpert in its exercise generally starves in the end.’

Once, on a journey in Italy, a certain courtier who wished to annoy him, said: ‘I will speak to you candidly, if you will allow me.’ To this he replied, ‘I would fain hear you do so, for when I am on my travels, I naturally wish to meet with anything uncommon.’

Once, for some temporary reason or other, he was under the necessity of asking a loan of money from somebody. This person, in excusing himself for declining to advance the money, concluded by stating that if he had been a rich man, his greatest concern and desire would have been to accommodate a friend. To this he rejoined, ‘I should be sorry indeed that you should ever be in concern on my account, so I pray God that you may never be rich.’

A rich miser having been robbed of a few coins, he said the fellow had acted shabbily even to the thieves.

When his end was approaching he composed for himself the following epitaph, which after his death was duly engraved on his tomb:—

COLUMBUS AND PEDRO GUTIERREZ. 153

HERE LIE
THE BONES OF
FILIPPO OTTONIERI,
BORN FOR VIRTUOUS ACTIONS,
AND FOR GLORY.
HE LIVED IDLE AND USELESS,
AND DIED WITHOUT FAME,
BUT NOT WHOLLY IGNORANT
OF NATURE,
AND OF HIS DESTINY.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN COLUMBUS AND PEDRO
GUTIERREZ.

COLUMBUS.

'Tis a lovely night, my friend.

GUTIERREZ.

Ay, 'tis so indeed; and methinks it would look lovelier
still if viewed on *terra firma*.

COLUMBUS.

By my faith, you're right. Then you too are weary of
our navigation?

GUTIERREZ.

Not of navigation in the abstract; but this voyage of ours
is turning out longer than I could have expected, and begins
to be somewhat tedious, to say the least. But for all that,
never think that I rail against you as the others do. Rather
be well assured that, come what may, I will ever support
you as heretofore with all my might and main. Yet while

we are on the subject, and just between ourselves, I wish you would tell me plainly and sincerely if you are still as confident as you were at first of finding land in this part of the world; or if, after such prolonged disappointment, you begin to feel a little doubt about it.

COLUMBUS.

Well, to speak frankly, as I can venture to do with so discreet a friend as you, I confess that I *am* beginning to feel some qualms on the point, and all the more so since certain symptoms which had given me great hopes have turned out illusory; as in the case of those sea-birds which passed over us, flying from the west, a few days after we had left Gomera, and which I took as a sign that land was near, but I was deceived. Similarly, day by day I find myself disappointed in more than one prognostication which I had formed before we set sail as to certain phenomena which I believed would present themselves during our voyage. And so I begin to say to myself that just as these anticipations about which I was so confident have proved delusive, so I may possibly be disappointed in my main anticipation that we should fall in with land on the further side of this ocean. And yet that expectation is so well grounded that if it should prove false, I never again would rely on any human conclusion not actually based on ocular demonstration or physical touch.

At the same time I am forced to admit that fact often diverges widely from speculation; and I ask myself how we can be certain that each part of the world resembles all its other parts, or that the western hemisphere must necessarily be occupied by land as well as water, merely because such is the case in the east. We know not but that the whole of it may be occupied by one vast ocean, or even that it may

present neither land nor water, but some totally different element. Then, assuming that it contains lands and seas, like the parts we know, we cannot be sure, that it is inhabited, or even that it is habitable. And even if it be inhabited no less than our own country, we have no assurance that its inhabitants are rational beings, or, if rational, that they are men at all, and not some other species of intellectual creatures. And lastly, even if its inhabitants be men, we cannot be certain that they at all resemble those with whom we are acquainted. They might greatly excel us in stature, strength, and dexterity, and be gifted with far higher spirit and intelligence. They might be greatly more civilised than we are, and far more advanced in arts and sciences.

These and such-like doubts begin to fill my mind; and of a truth Nature is evidently endued with such manifold and varied powers that it is impossible to form any sure conclusions as to the scope and character of her operations in distant and unknown lands. Nay, it is only reasonable to suppose that we are liable to fall into error when we reason from the conditions of known portions of the world to those of the unknown; and it is only too probable that the latter may present phenomena startling in their nature, and widely different from those with which we are familiar. Thus, for example, we have seen with our own eyes that in these waters the magnetic needle declines from the pole-star, and leans no little towards the west; a thing new to us, and hitherto unknown to navigators; and which, however I ponder on it, I am unable to account for or explain. Yet for all this I do not imply that we should lend any credit to the fables of the ancients touching the wonders of the unseen world, and of this ocean in particular; such, for instance, as Hanno's¹ extravagant account of the countries which he

¹ See Note 36.

professed to have seen, which by night were filled with flames, and in which, as he alleged, there were torrents of fire which debouched into the sea. Of a piece with such fictions, and no less idle and foolish in their nature, are all the fears which have tortured our ship's company on this voyage as to miraculous occurrences, as they thought, and phenomena which they supposed to be of fearful import; as when they beheld that vast mass of sea-weed which made the ocean resemble a meadow, and which so greatly impeded our progress; and whereupon they straightway imagined that we had reached the confines of the navigable sea. All that I would imply by my answer to your question is that although my anticipations are founded on the strictest probabilities, not only in my judgment but in that of many geographers, astronomers, and navigators with whom I conferred, in Spain, Italy, and Portugal, yet they might well prove fallacious, since we know that many other conclusions drawn from apparently sound premisses have been falsified by experience, especially when they have related to matters which are plunged in obscurity.

GUTIERREZ.

Then the long and the short of it is that you have staked your life, and those of your comrades, on an issue which has no more substantial basis than that of a purely speculative opinion.

COLUMBUS.

'Tis even so—I cannot deny it. But yet, leaving out of sight the fact that men daily risk their lives for issues far more shadowy and baseless than this, for aims of no importance, or for no aim at all, I would ask you just to consider this question a little. If at this moment you and

I and all our comrades were not on board these ships on the bosom of this ocean, in this trackless solitude, surrounded by doubts and dangers, I would ask you, I say, in what other condition we should probably be? How should we presumably be occupied, and how should we be passing our time? Is it certain that we should be any more happily situated? To me it seems highly probable that we might well be involved in even greater danger and anxiety than those which now surround us; or else that we should be consumed by an intolerable tedium. What is meant by a condition free from doubt and danger? If it necessarily implied happiness and contentment, I admit that it would be preferable to all other conditions; but if it be but another name for dull monotony and withering *ennui*, then I maintain that all other conditions would be preferable to it.

I say nothing of the glory we should win for ourselves, and the benefits we should confer on others, should our enterprise succeed as we hope. But if we reaped no other fruit from this voyage, I think it will prove most profitable to us if only because for a time it has kept us from rusting in inaction, and has caused us to value our lives, and to appreciate many other blessings which otherwise we should have held cheap.

You may have read or heard how the ancients wrote that frantic and unhappy lovers used to precipitate themselves into the sea from the rock of Santa Maura, then called the promontory of Leucadia;¹ and that if, after that desperate spring, they were rescued from death, they were ever after, by the favour of Apollo, freed from the pangs of hopeless love. I know not if it is to be believed that by this means they attained that boon; but this I do know, that if they

¹ See Note 37.

escaped from death, they would, at least for a time, and even without the favour of Apollo, hold dear that life which previously they had loathed; or, at all events, that they would be likely to appreciate it more than they formerly had done. Now I compare a voyage like ours to a leap from the rock of Leucadia. It is calculated to produce the same effect as such a leap produced; and its effect is likely to prove more durable; and for this reason it is probable that it will be found even more efficacious than that expedient.

It is commonly supposed that seamen and soldiers, being frequently exposed to deadly risks, hold life more cheaply than others do. I hold, on the contrary, that for that very reason few persons value and cherish life so much as soldiers and sailors do. How many blessings which, when possessed, are regarded with indifference; nay, how many things which are scarcely called blessings, are yet dear to the navigator, just because they are denied to him! Who ever ranks among the blessings of mankind the privilege of having a bit of dry ground to stand on? None but the mariner; and especially mariners like us, who, by reason of the dire uncertainty of their voyage, have no more ardent desire than to descry a point of land. This is our first waking thought each day; with this our minds are filled as we fall asleep each night; and if one day we shall spy the peak of a mountain, or the loom of a forest, we shall not be able to contain ourselves for rapture; while if once we set foot on land, the very thought that we are once more on a stable element, and that we may walk on it at will, will make us for a time think ourselves blest indeed.

GUTIERREZ.

All this is very true; and if only your speculative

conjectures prove as well founded as your justification of them is ingenious, we shall not fail one day to taste this bliss.

COLUMBUS.

For my part, although I no longer dare to count on it with certainty, I yet feel within me a strong hope that we are now near to its attainment. For some days now the lead, as you know, has touched soundings, and the nature of the substance which it brings up seems to me to afford hopeful indications. Towards evening, too, the clouds around the sun appear to me to have forms and hues different from what they had before. The air, as you may have perceived, is softer and milder than it used to be. The wind is no longer so strong or so steady as heretofore, but has become variable and uncertain, as if its currents were interrupted by some material obstacle. Then again there was that cane which yesterday we passed, floating on the sea, and which had the appearance of having some design or pattern carved on it;¹ and that branch of a tree covered with fresh red berries. The flights of birds, too, though I admit that they formerly deceived me, now pass so often, and in such numbers, and increase so much in frequency day by day, that I think we may now confidently find some hopes on their appearance, the more so as I have noticed among them some of a form which seems to indicate that they are not of any marine species. In a word, though I have no desire to be over-sanguine, yet all these indications, taken together, fill me with confident expectation.

GUTIERREZ.

God grant that, this time, it may come true.

¹ A recorded incident of the voyage of Columbus.

THE PRAISE OF BIRDS.

THE recluse philosopher Amelius¹ one morning in spring was seated on the shady side of his villa, with his books beside him, plunged in study. But his attention being distracted by the singing of the birds around him, he shortly laid aside the volume he was reading, and surrendered himself to listening and meditation. Finally, taking pen in hand, he there and then wrote as follows:—

Birds are by nature the most joyous creatures in the world. By this I mean, not only that the sight of them and the music of their song always fill us with delight, but that they themselves probably feel joy and gladness more than any other animals. Almost all other creatures have a grave and serious manner, and many of them seem actually oppressed by melancholy. They rarely evince symptoms of gladness, and when they do so their indications of it are slight and transient. Even in their enjoyments they do not seem to exult, or to betray any tokens of hilarity. The green fields, the smiling landscapes, the brilliant sunshine, the crisp and mellow air may possibly afford them pleasure, but they give no indications of such a sentiment, unless indeed we are to except the case of hares, and if there be any truth in the statement of Xenophon that on moonlight nights, and especially when the moon is full, these animals are wont to frisk about and gambol together from sheer delight at the brilliancy of the moonshine.

But birds, alike in their aspect and in all their movements, generally have an appearance of great happiness; and this alone would account for the fact that the very sight of them cheers us. Their forms, too, and their attitudes

¹ See Note 38.

are such as denote a natural capacity and a special disposition for the enjoyment of pleasure. Nor are these characteristics to be regarded as illusory and deceptive. For each delight which they feel they burst into song, and the keener their delight the fuller and the more elaborate is the volume of their melody; while, since they sing throughout the greater part of their waking hours, it may be inferred that they are usually cheerful and happy. And although it has been observed that while they are pairing they sing more sweetly and more continuously than they do at other times, it is not to be supposed that love is the only sentiment which incites them to song. For it is evident that when the weather is placid and serene they sing much more than they do while it is cloudy and disturbed; while during tempests, as well as under all conditions which alarm them, they are mute. But when the storm has passed, or their fears are removed, they immediately resume their cheery strains and their mutual frolics. Similarly, they are wont to sing in the early morn the moment they awake, evidently moved thereto partly by the pleasure they derive from the dawning of a new day, and in part by that sensation of satisfaction which is common to all creatures on finding themselves restored to life and refreshed by sleep. They also seem to draw exquisite delight from the bright verdure of the fields and woods, from the fertility of the dales, from pure and limpid streams, and from all the charms of the landscape.

Now these facts go to show that the same things which afford delight to us are attractive to birds also; as indeed may be seen from a consideration of the very objects by which they are frequently allured towards the nets or snares of the fowler, and from a contemplation of the character of the country which is generally most frequented by them,

and where their songs are most incessant and impassioned. No other animals, save perhaps to a certain extent some of those which are domesticated and dwell with men, share with us this preference for amenity and beauty of situation. Nor is this to be wondered at, since the wild animals delight in nature unadulterated. Now great part of that which we call natural is not really so, but rather it is artificial ; since ploughed fields, trees and other plants trained and disposed in formal order, rivers confined between defined embankments and directed in a particular channel, and the like, are not in their natural condition, and do not wear the appearance which they would naturally present. Hence the aspect of any country inhabited by civilised men, to say nothing of cities and other places of purely human resort, is strictly artificial, and unlike what it would be in a state of nature. Yet the haunts of men seem to be invariably preferred by birds ; and there are some who would accentuate this peculiarity by contending that the voices of the birds are more soft and sweet, and their notes better modulated, in civilised lands like ours than they are in regions inhabited by savage and uncultured men ; inferring from this circumstance that birds, even in a state of liberty, catch something of the very civilisation of the people among whom they dwell.

Whether this be true or not, it certainly is a remarkable provision of nature which assigns to the same species of creatures at once the gift of song and the power of flight, so that they whose office it is to delight all other animals with their music should frequent lofty situations whence their notes may be diffused over a wide area, and reach a large number of hearers, thus rendering the air, that element which is the special realm of sound, populous with musical and vocal creatures. Assuredly the song of birds

affords keen delight, not to man alone, but to all other animals; and I believe this arises not from the mere sweetness and variety of its harmony, great as these properties unquestionably are, but mainly from that suggestion of gladness naturally inherent in all song, and more especially in that of birds. It is, in a word, the laughter of these creatures, which convulses them when they are happy.

From this circumstance it may almost be said that birds share with man the power and privilege of laughing, which none of the other animals possess. Hence some have held that as man has been defined as an intellectual and reasoning animal, he might equally well have been distinguished as a laughing one, seeing that the power to laugh is as peculiar to man as is the gift of reason. But is it not a strange thing that while man is the most afflicted of all animals,¹ he is the only one which possesses the power to laugh, a gift withheld from all other creatures on earth? Strange, too, is the use we sometimes make of this faculty, since even in the most acute calamities, in the profoundest distress, when life itself is odious, when the vanity of all earthly things is most apparent, when joy is impossible and hope is dead, men are seen to laugh! nay, the more they realise the vanity of all earthly joys and the reality of human misery, and the more hopeless and indisposed to merriment they are, the more do we find some men prone to laughter! Indeed the very nature of laughter, and its governing principles and motives, are so inexplicable that sometimes it may best be described as a sort of transient madness, a temporary delirium of the soul. For in truth men, being never truly satisfied, or really delighted by anything, can never have a just and reasonable cause for laughter. In fact, it would be curious to inquire how and

¹ See Note 39.

under what circumstances man first became conscious of his possession of this faculty, and first actually employed it. For it is certain that in his primitive and savage state he is generally grave in his demeanour, and indeed apparently melancholy in his mood, as are the lower animals. For this reason, not only am I convinced that laughter made its appearance in the world subsequently to tears,—a point indeed on which there can be little doubt,—but also that a long period must have elapsed before it may be said to have been even discovered. During this period it may be assumed, as indeed is expressly stated by Virgil, that not even the mother smiled upon her babe, nor did the babe recognise its mother with a smile. And if at the present time, at least in civilised societies, man begins to laugh soon after his birth, I am of opinion that this is mainly the effect of example and imitation, and that children laugh because they see others do so.

For my part, I am disposed to think that laughter had its origin in intoxication, itself a condition peculiar to the human race. And we know that intoxication prevailed among men long before they had attained to civilisation; as is proved by the fact that the rudest peoples are acquainted with intoxicants of one kind or another, and use them with avidity. Nor is this to be wondered at, for men are of all animals the most exposed to unhappiness, and therefore they alone are impelled to seek consolation in this soothing mental alienation which, inducing forgetfulness of self, amounts to a temporary intermission of life itself, during which the sense of suffering is diminished, or actually suspended for a time. And, as touching laughter in this connection, it is a familiar fact that savages, who in their sober moments are usually serious and sad, when intoxicated laugh immoderately, and even chatter and sing,

contrary to their usual custom. However, I propose to treat this question more fully in a history of laughter, which I contemplate composing, and in which, after investigating its origin, I shall follow up its development and vicissitudes down to the present time, when, as we see, it flourishes exuberantly, and occupies in the economy of civilised life a position almost equal to that formerly filled by virtue, justice, honour, and the like, wielding an influence scarcely inferior to that exercised by those principles, and in many cases bridling the evil proclivities of men, and deterring them from wicked actions.

But to return to the subject of the song of birds. The spectacle of happiness in others, provided envy be absent, is at all times cheering. How admirable, then, is the bounty of Nature which has provided that whereas the music and the merriment of men are reserved for themselves or their friends alone, the harmony of birds, which is an expression of gladness, and, as I have said, a species of laughter, is, as it were, a public and gratuitous entertainment. And how generously has she ordained that earth and air should swarm with creatures which by their joyous strains seem perpetually to sing the praises of universal existence, and by bearing witness, delusive though it may be, to the gladness of the world, to invite all other animals to be happy.

Nor is it without reason that birds should be happier than all other creatures, and should indubitably proclaim the fact, since, as I have already intimated, they are in fact of all animals the best formed and fitted by nature for enjoyment. First of all, it is evident that they can never know tedium, or suffer from monotony, for they are enabled to change their resorts from time to time; they pass at will from land to land, and soar at pleasure, in an incredibly

THE PRAISE OF BIRDS.

short time, and with perfect ease, from the lower regions to the highest realms of air. Thus they command an infinite variety and diversity in their existence; they are continually exercising their frames, and their lives are rich in extrinsic enjoyments. All other animals, as soon as they have provided for their material necessities, love to be at ease and at rest. None of them, if we except the fishes and some of the winged insects, undertake long excursions from sheer love of amusement. Similarly, savage man is averse to gratuitous activity, and unless when pursued by the elements, or menaced by any formidable catastrophes, he shuns all exertion in excess of that little which is required for the supply of his daily needs. He loves ease and apathetic inactivity, and passes nearly all his time sitting sluggish and silent in his rude hut, or in the open air, or haply in the fissures and caverns of the rocks. The birds, on the other hand, linger little in any one spot, but are perpetually flitting from place to place for no apparent reason. Their power of flight seems in itself a delight to them, and, at times, having flown from sheer love of change hundreds of miles from their usual resort, they will return to it on the evening of the same day. And even during the brief intervals while they perch on any particular spot, they seem never at rest, but are perpetually turning from side to side, stooping their bodies, extending their necks, preening their feathers, and moving in various ways, with an indescribable swiftness and agility of motion. In a word, from the time when a bird emerges from the egg till the moment of its death, saving the intervals of sleep, it is never for a moment at rest; and in view of these things it may be said that the normal state of all other animals, including men, is repose, but that that of birds is motion.

Moreover, their mental faculties, so to speak, would seem

to combine with their physical structure in rendering them more susceptible of happiness than other creatures. In them the sense of hearing is prodigiously acute, and that of sight powerful to a degree which we can scarcely realise. By means of this faculty they command the most extended and varied prospects, and, poised in air, they can in a moment survey such a wide range of earth as we can with difficulty conceive. From this it may be assumed that they must possess extraordinary vivacity of temperament and most vivid powers of imagination; not that sort of profound fervid and stormy imagination which Dante or Tasso had, and which is a fatal gift, parent of endless anxieties and tortures, but rather a fancy rich, varied, nimble, fluctuating, and, like that of children, a fruitful source of joyous thoughts, of sweet illusions, of varied consolations and delights; and, in a word, the greatest boon conferred by Nature on living creatures. Thus birds are endowed in a rich measure with the best part of this faculty, without partaking in its painful or malignant developments. And thus, not only have they an exuberant enjoyment of external and objective existence, but they are also rich participators in that part of life which is internal and subjective; and this, too, in such a manner that it is productive of happiness in them, as in the case of children, and not of misery, as in that of the majority of men. In fine, it may be said that in their bodily agility, as well as in their temperament and disposition, birds have a manifest affinity with children; and if the joys of childhood were only common to the other ages of humanity, and if the trials of mature age were not more acute than those of our early years, man would probably have cause to endure his lot with patience.

To my thinking, the nature of birds, regarded from all points of view, more nearly approaches to perfection than

that of any other creatures. This might be said to follow from the single fact that they excel all other creatures in the senses of sight and hearing, the two most important faculties of animated beings. But, in addition to this, we have seen that while all other animals are naturally inclined to inaction, birds are naturally inclined to motion. Now motion is obviously a condition more vivid and full of life than inaction; nay, motion is of the very essence of life. But if birds excel in the faculty of motion, as well as in the senses of sight and hearing, it may be concluded that their life is fuller and richer, both subjectively and objectively, than that of any other creatures. But if life be itself a more perfect condition than its opposite, and if greater fulness and richness of life be synonymous with greater perfection of being, it follows that the nature of birds is the most perfect in the animated world. To all this we must add that birds are peculiarly adapted to endure the extremes alike of cold and heat, as well as their most sudden vicissitudes, for they often soar up from the warmth of earth to the loftiest regions of the air, where intense cold prevails; while many of them, in their migrations, pass with incredible swiftness from clime to clime.

In fine, just as Anacreon wished he could transform himself into a mirror to be continually looked on by her whom he loved; or into a robe to clothe her; into an unguent to anoint her; into water to lave her; into a scarf to be pressed to her bosom; into a pearl to hang upon her neck; or even into a slipper which her foot might touch; so I should wish, if only for a time, to be converted into a bird, to taste the gladness of their life.

SONG OF THE GREAT WILD COCK.

CERTAIN Hebrew Rabbis and writers affirm that between earth and sky there dwells a great bird whose feet stand on the earth while its crest touches the heavens. This giant fowl, in addition to sundry remarkable properties, all of which are described at length by the writers aforesaid, possesses reason and language; or at all events it seems to have been instructed, it is not known by whom, after the manner of parrots, to utter words of articulate speech. This has been proved by the discovery of an ancient parchment on which is written in the Hebrew character, but in a dialect mixed with Chaldean, Targumic, Rabbinical, Cabalistic, and Talmudic, a canticle bearing the title *Scir detar-negol bara letzafr*, which words have been ascertained to mean, the morning song of the great wild cock.

With infinite difficulty, and not without consulting several Hebrew Rabbis, cabalists, theologians, doctors, and philosophers, I have succeeded in penetrating the sense of this document, and I have reduced it into our vernacular in the words a little lower subjoined. I have not yet ascertained whether this hymn is uttered by the wild cock on the morning of each day, or only at intervals, or whether it was uttered on one occasion only. Neither have I learned who hears it or ever did hear it sung; nor have I been able to determine whether the language in which it is couched is the ordinary speech of the fowl, or whether it has been translated into this dialect from some other language. As regards the translation of it which follows, so desirous was I to render it as faithful as possible by every means in my power, that although its burden is of a poetical character, I have deemed it desirable to employ prose rather than verse in my render-

ing of it. Its somewhat disjointed, unconnected, and, in places, inflated style must not be attributed to me, since in this respect it faithfully reflects the original text, which latter in this particular feature corresponds with the genius of oriental languages, and more especially of oriental poetry. It runs as follows :—

“Up, mortals, rouse ye—another day is born. Reality returns to earth, and vain illusions flee. Arise, resume the load of life—come back from the ideal to the real world.

“At such a time each man collects and reviews the thoughts of this present existence; recalls to his memory its aims, its cares, its toils; and meditates on the joys or woes which await him in the new-born day. At such a time each mortal specially desires that joyous hopes and sweet anticipations may dwell within his soul. But few indeed find such desires fulfilled. To most, returning consciousness is but returning woe. The wretched no sooner wakes than he returns to his wretchedness. Sweet, oh, passing sweet is that slumber to sweeten which hope vies with visions of happiness; the one and the other may abide till the morning; but then, farewell to both.

“If the sleep of mortals were perpetual, or enduring with life; if beneath the orb of day all creatures on the earth lay steeped in unconsciousness; if no sun existed; if no cattle lowed in the fields, and no beasts roared in the forest; if the song of birds, the hum of bees, and the rustle of the butterfly were stilled; if no motion were perceptible, and no sound heard save the murmur of the waters or the voice of the tempest; if all this were so, the universe might indeed be useless, but would it contain less happiness or more misery than now?

“Oh Sun, author of day, and presiding genius of our

waking hours, I ask thee if in the course of all the æons during which thou hast risen and set, thou hast ever seen a single living creature truly happy? Of the countless efforts of man beheld by thee throughout the ages, dost thou think that so much as one ever attained its aim, the satisfaction, durable or transient, of him who made it? Dost thou see, or didst thou ever see, Felicity within the bounds of earth? Where does she tarry, in what wood or mount or vale; in what land, peopled or void; in what planet of the many thy rays illuminate and warm? Haply she is veiled from thy view, and lurks in some cavern's nook; in the bosom of the earth, or the depths of the sea. What living thing hath knowledge of her; what plant or organism nourished by thy beams; what creature informed with life or vegetative force nath tasted her? Ay, thou thyself, thou who like some unwearied Titan swiftly, by day and night, sleepless and scorning rest, dost traverse the stupendous orbit which is prescribed to thee, art *thou* happy, or miserable?

"Up, mortals, rouse ye. Not yet are ye liberated from life. A time will come when no outward force, no effort from within, shall stir ye from your endless sleep. But not yet is death permitted to you. From time to time, and ever only for a time, its counterfeit is conceded to you; for life itself could not long live if 'twere not often intermitted. The denial of this brief and terminable slumber is murderous to man, and brings to him the sleep which never ends. Such is life! To maintain it, it is needful daily to lay it down; to breathe a while, and to revive it with a draught of death!

"In all creatures the one and only visible object of life is—death. Verily, the destiny of life is not happiness, since no living thing is happy. All animated beings indeed aim at felicity in all their works and all their efforts; but they

never grasp it ; and throughout their lives the true, the only, goal of all their sufferings and toils is—death.

“The earliest hour of day is the most endurable to sentient things. Few indeed, on awaking, are confronted by glad anticipations ; but they soon create them ; for at that hour the mind, even without substantial cause, is, if not prone to cheerfulness, at least disposed to patience. Even he who, when overtaken by sleep, was filled with despair, on awaking, welcomes hope, however hopeless he may be. At that hour the troubles and the toils, the anxieties and fears of life seem smaller than at other seasons. Ay, then sometimes even the anguish of yesterday is itself derided, and regarded as but the effect of delusion or of a diseased fancy. Evening is like old age, sad, discouraged and hopeless ; morn resembles youth, full of confidence and hope. But, like the youth of life, so is the youth of each returning day, brief and fleeting ; and swiftly merged in noon and night.

“Youth itself, though the best thing life contains, is but misery ; if for no other reason than because even the slight satisfaction it can yield fails and declines ere it has been well tasted ; and scarcely does man arrive at maturity, and feel his capabilities, ere he is conscious of commencing decay, and aware of incipient decline. In every species of mortal creatures life itself is but one long decay. Nature is at all times bent on dissolution. Everything in the universe is ever hastening to death. The world alone seems exempt from destruction ; for although in autumn and winter Nature seems to sicken and grow old, yet in spring she ever revives. Nevertheless, as mortals each morning seem to recover a portion of their vigour, yet daily sink into decline, so, too, the world itself, though in the youth of time it may seem to renew its youth from year to

year, yet is ever surely advancing towards old age; and a time may come when, like all other created things, it too may become extinct. And even as mighty realms and empires, with all their marvellous developments and convulsions, once the wonder of mankind, have passed away, and left no trace behind, so of the world itself, and all the infinite vicissitudes of created things, one day no trace may be apparent; but a blank silence and a profoundest hush may fill the realms of space. Thus this strange *arcanum*, this fearful enigma of universal existence, may pass away and disappear before ever it shall be penetrated or solved."

DIALOGUE BETWEEN TIMANDER AND ELEANDER.¹

TIMANDER.

I must and will tell you plainly that the substance and the tendency, alike of your writings and of your conversation, appear to me highly reprehensible.

ELEANDER.

So long as my *actions* do not so appear to you, I am content. Writings and sayings matter little.

TIMANDER.

Nay, in your actions I find nothing to reprehend. I know that if you confer no benefits on others, it is from want of power; and I see that if you inflict no injuries on them, it is from want of will. But in your words, spoken

¹ See Note 40.

and written, I find much to blame ; and I will not admit that in these times such matters have little importance, since nowadays life may be said to consist of little else. But let me for the nonce pass over your discourses, and let us speak of your writings. Your incessant censure and derision of your species is, to say the least, a little out of fashion.

ELEANDER.

Then I suppose my brain must be out of fashion, and it is no new thing that the progeny should resemble the parent.

TIMANDER.

Neither will it be any new thing if your books, like all things which run counter to established opinions, should have little success.

ELEANDER.

No matter. For all this, they won't go begging their bread from door to door.

TIMANDER.

Forty or fifty years back philosophers were wont to rail against the human race ; but at the present day they do just the opposite.

ELEANDER.

Is it your belief that forty or fifty years back, in railing at the human race, the philosophers spoke truth, or not ?

TIMANDER.

For the most part I avow that they too often spoke the truth.

ELEANDER.

Well, are you of opinion that in the last forty or fifty years the human race has undergone a revolution for the better?

TIMANDER.

No. I am not of this opinion. But all this has nothing to do with my contention.

ELEANDER.

How has it nothing to do with it? Have men of late so increased in capacity or improved in character that the writers of to-day should be constrained to flatter, or bound to reverence them?

TIMANDER.

This is mere trifling in a serious discussion.

ELEANDER.

Very well, to be serious. I am well aware that the men of to-day, though they wrong their fellows, as their ancestors did, yet feel constrained to praise their generation, as their ancestors did not. But I, who wrong no man, do not feel called upon to do violence to my conscience by extolling my contemporaries.

TIMANDER.

Like all other men, however, you *are* called upon to do all you can to benefit your species.

ELEANDER.

If my species feels called on to do the very opposite to me, I see not how the obligation you speak of should

be binding upon me. But assuming that I am so bound, what am I to do if I cannot benefit them?

TIMANDER.

By your actions perhaps you cannot; and few others can. But by your writings you could benefit them; and you ought to do so. And little benefit is done by books which, like yours, continually sneer at men in general. Nay, such books do infinite harm.

ELEANDER.

I grant they do no good. I deny that they do harm. But do you seriously think that any books can ever benefit the human race?

TIMANDER.

I do, and not I only, but all the world believes so.

ELEANDER.

What sort of books?

TIMANDER.

Many sorts, but especially those on morals.

ELEANDER.

Well, this is not believed by all the world, since I for one do not believe it, as the lady said to Socrates. But if any books on morals could benefit anybody, I should think those most likely to do so would be such as are of a poetical character. When I say poetical I use the term in its widest sense, and would imply works intended to move the imagination, whether written in prose or verse. Now I should have a poor opinion of that poetry which,

when read and meditated on, does not leave in the mind of the reader as much nobility of sentiment as will, at least for the space of half-an-hour, prevent him from harbouring a base thought or doing a dishonourable deed. But if, an hour after reading it, the reader breaks faith with his dearest friend, I would not on this account condemn the poetry, for, if I did, I should have to condemn the most beautiful, and most impassioned, and most noble poems that ever were written. While as to such readers as dwell in great cities, I would leave them altogether out of account, since they, even if they ever read anything attentively, are incapable of being elevated, even for half-an-hour, or even of being moved at all, by poetry of any sort.

TIMANDER.

You speak, as is your wont, cynically, and your tone would cause it to be inferred that you have been habitually misunderstood and ill-treated by your fellow-men, since such is generally the cause of the ill-humour and disdain which certain men express in regard to their species.

ELEANDER.

I will not say that men have treated me, or do treat me, particularly well; especially since, if I did so, I should be posing as a solitary instance of such experience. But neither, on the other hand, have they done me any particular harm, since I desire nothing from them, and compete with them in nothing, and therefore I am not much exposed to their malevolence. And indeed I assure you that, feeling myself destitute of the qualities necessary for the attainment of popularity, and unsuited for social intercourse, whether this arise from some defect in my nature,

or some error in my conduct, if men were to treat me better than they do, I should esteem them still less.

TIMANDER.

Then are you all the more to be condemned. Hatred of your species and a desire to be avenged on them might have some excuse if any of them had wronged you. But your hatred, by your own confession, has apparently no justification beyond a wretched eccentric ambition to pose as a misanthrope, like Timon; a desire abominable in itself, and specially alien to the spirit of the present age, so eminently devoted to philanthropy.

ELEANDER.

As for ambition, it is not necessary that I should reply to you, since I have already told you that I desire nothing from men. And if this appear to you incredible, you may at least believe that it is not ambition which could have moved me to publish sentiments which at the present day, as you affirm, win for their writer not applause but execration. Then as to hatred of my species, I am so far removed from that, that not only have I no wish, I have not even the power, to hate anybody, not even those who specially injure me; indeed I am totally incapable of hatred and wholly impenetrable to it—a circumstance which in a great measure explains my inaptitude for intercourse with society. Moreover, I find myself unable to amend this defect in my character, since I hold that he who seeks to gratify himself by displeasing or injuring others, does so, not so much for the sake of injuring the latter, since this is not the conceivable aim of any thought or act, but for the sake of doing good to

himself—an object at once natural and in itself blameless. Then again, whenever I perceive any vice or fault in others, before proceeding to condemn it, I make a practice of examining myself, and supposing myself placed in the same circumstances as the offender, and as I then almost always find myself tainted with the same fault, or at least capable of committing it, I have no mind to be severe in my judgment. Thus I always reserve my wrath for cases in which I may detect a degree of depravity of which my own nature is incapable; and up to the present time I have met with none such.

Finally, the impression of the vanity of all human things so continually fills my mind that I am resolved not to take up arms about any one of them; convinced that anger and hatred are passions altogether too intense to be suitable to the brevity and insignificance of life. Thus you may perceive what a difference there is between my feelings and the temper of Timon. Timon, while he hated and shunned all other men, loved and caressed Alcibiades alone, because he regarded him as likely to be the author of many calamities to their common country. I, on the other hand, would not indeed have hated that statesman, but I would have shunned him more than all the others, and would have warned the Athenians of their danger; and exhorted them to avert it. Some have said that Timon did not hate men, but beasts in human form. For me, I hate neither beasts nor men.

TIMANDER.

It may be so, but assuredly you love none.

ELEANDER.

Hark, friend,—I was born to love; and I *have* loved, as

warmly too, perhaps, as a human soul can love. To-day, although, as you see, I have not yet reached the frigid or even the tepid stage of life, I blush not to avow that I love no creature save myself, and I love myself as little as I can, compatibly with the necessities of nature. Nevertheless, I am wont and prompt to undergo suffering in my own person, rather than be the cause of it to others. I believe you yourself, little as you know of my habits, will bear testimony to this.

TIMANDER.

I deny it not.

ELEANDER.

So that for my part, putting aside all thought of self, I cease not in my efforts to procure for others that greatest good, that sole good, which I am reduced to desire for myself; I mean freedom from suffering.

TIMANDER.

Yet you confess in formal terms that you do not love your species in the abstract?

ELEANDER.

Ay, in formal terms. But just as I would wish to punish the wicked, without hating them, so if it were in my power, I would gladly benefit my fellow-creatures without loving them.

TIMANDER.

Well, be it so. But, in fine, if you are not moved thereto by injuries received, or by hatred of your species, or by ambition of any kind, what motive prompts you to write as you do?

ELEANOR.

Sundry motives. In the first place there is my intolerance of all dissimulation, a thing to which I sometimes make concessions in my conversation, but in my writings never; since often I am almost forced to speak, but no man is ever forced to write, and if I ever am virtually compelled to say what I do not think, I certainly would not take the trouble to put it on paper.

In the next place, we know that all wise men mock those who at the present day write in Latin, since nobody now speaks that language, and few understand it; and I think it is just as ridiculous for us, in writing and speaking, to credit men with the possession of qualities which are no longer extant; and to assume the survival of conditions, real or fancied, which were admired in ancient times, but are known alike by writers and readers, speakers and hearers, to be non-existent now. I find nothing strange in the fact that men should use masks and disguises to deceive others, or to conceal themselves. But that men should go about always masked and travestied in the same manner, and without deceiving one another, and full well penetrating each other's disguises; this strikes me as little less than childishness. If they were to pull off their masks, and throw off their dominoes, the result would be all the same, and they would be much more comfortable. For this perpetual simulation and acting, this habit of representing people in a totally different light from the true one, is not only perfectly futile but is exceedingly troublesome. If primitive men had passed to modern civilisation at a bound, instead of by degrees, is it to be thought that their language would have contained even the names of such qualities and conditions as I have referred to, or, *à fortiori*, that they

would be constantly repeating them and prating about them? In fact this custom seems to me to resemble some of those ancient ceremonies or usages which, although most alien to modern manners, yet hold their ground from the mere force of habit. But I can neither conform to such ceremonies, nor adopt such usages, and therefore I write in the modern tongue; not in that of Trojan times.

Then again, in my writings, I seek not to sneer at men so much as to rail at Destiny. No single thing appears to me more manifest and palpable than the necessary unhappiness of all living creatures. If this unhappiness be not a fact, then my premisses are false; and we may drop this and all other discussion. If it be a fact, why should it not be permitted to me to lament it openly and frankly, and to say that I suffer? Now if I were to bewail it with tears—and this is the third of the motives which constrain me to write as I do—I should only afflict others and myself to no purpose. But in making light of our sorrows, I find some consolation myself, and I hope to communicate some to my fellow-men. And even if I fail to do so, I yet hold it for certain that contempt of suffering is the sole good to be extracted from it, and the sole available medicine for its cure. The poets say that Despair is ever represented with a smile on his lips. Yet you are not to suppose that I have no pity for the sorrows of men, but seeing that they cannot be relieved or evaded by any power or art or effort of ours, I hold it to be more worthy of me as a man, and better to become a courageous and magnanimous despair, to laugh at the universal and inevitable ills of life, than to sit down and moan and weep over them with my fellows, or to encourage them to do so.

To sum up, I would say that I desire the universal well-being of our species as much as you or any man can do,

but I have no hope of its accomplishment; and I cannot feed myself with any expectation of it, as so many philosophers of this age do. Nay, my despair of it is so absolute, and so rooted in conviction and certainty, that it leaves me no room for dreams and joyous imaginations as to our future here; now you well know that no man is disposed to attempt the prosecution of that which he knows or believes to be impossible of attainment, or if he does attempt it, he does so with little heart and little energy. So that if I were to write in a strain which ran counter to my convictions, even if these were erroneous, I should never accomplish anything worthy of consideration.

TIMANDER.

Yet when a man's convictions are at variance with the truth, as yours are, he ought to reform them.

ELEANDER.

As for myself, I consider that I am unhappy, and in this I know that I am not deceived. If other men are happy, I congratulate them with all my heart. I am also certain that I cannot escape from infelicity until I die. If other men are more hopeful, again I congratulate them.

TIMANDER.

All of us know unhappiness, and all of us have known it. I presume that you will not boast that this opinion of yours has much novelty in it. But I hold that the condition of man is capable of immense amelioration in the future, just as it has undergone immense amelioration in the past. You seem to have forgotten, or to be determined not to remember, that man is believed to be even perfectible.

ELEANDER.

As to his perfectibility, I am willing to take your word for it. But as to his ever becoming perfect, which is the main point, I know not when I shall have to believe that, on the word of you or of anybody else.

TIMANDER.

He has not yet attained to perfection simply because he has not yet had time to do so. But there can be no doubt that he is on the high road to its attainment.

ELEANDER.

Oh, I don't doubt it. The few years which have passed since the beginning of the world have of course not sufficed for his perfection, and we ought not on that account to judge of his faculties and his destiny, especially since hitherto he has had other matters to attend to. But now, I presume, he is devoting himself exclusively to this work.

TIMANDER.

Assuredly throughout the civilised world the attention of men is being sedulously directed to this aim, and considering the wealth and efficacy of the means available, all so prodigiously increased in recent times, it may be believed that the result in view will be achieved in no long time. And this expectation is of itself a highly salutary factor in the process, in view of the varied enterprise and activity which it originates or promotes. This being so, your doctrines, mischievous and reprehensible at any time, are doubly so now, and it is positively abominable in you to parade your counsels of despair at such a juncture, and to inculcate in men your theories as to the inevitable character

of human misery, the vanity of life, the imbecility and insignificance of man, and the ingrained depravity of his nature; a teaching calculated only to prostrate his energy, to rob him of that self-esteem which is the very source of all honourable and useful exertion; and to distract him from the pursuit of his truest weal.

ELEANDER.

Good. But touching my expressed views as to the infelicity of man, I wish you would tell me in precise terms whether you think these views are true or false.

TIMANDER.

You ever have recourse to your wonted weapons, and if I admit that your assertions are in the main true, you will claim the victory in our discussion. But let me observe that not every truth should be preached to all persons, or enforced at all seasons.

ELEANDER.

Thank you,—now have the goodness to answer one more question. Touching these truths, which I beg leave to say I do not preach, but merely express; are they cardinal verities in philosophy, or merely accessory ones?

TIMANDER.

Nay, I regard them as of the very essence of all philosophy.

ELEANDER.

In that case those persons are grievously deceived who assert and preach that the perfection of men consists in the knowledge of the truth; that all their sufferings proceed from ignorance and error alone, and that then only will

the human race be happy, when all men, or the majority of men, shall know the truth, and regulate their lives in conformity with its rules alone. Yet such is the teaching of nearly all the philosophers, ancient and modern. Now, according to you, those very truths which by your own admission are of the essence of all philosophy, ought to be concealed from the majority of men; and I doubt not you would readily consent that they should be ignored or forgotten by all; since if known or borne in mind they cannot fail to be noxious. But this is tantamount to saying that philosophy ought to be banished from the world. I am well aware that the ultimate conclusion to be drawn from true and perfect philosophy is, that it were better not to philosophise. Now from this it must be inferred, first that philosophy is useless, since, in order to arrive at the conclusion that it is better not to philosophise, it is not necessary to be a philosopher; and secondly, that it is mischievous, since this same ultimate conclusion can be arrived at only by a painful experience; and, when arrived at, it is incapable of practical adoption, seeing that it is not in the option of men to forget truths once ascertained; and that no habit is so difficult to lay aside as that of philosophising. In fine, philosophy, which set out by hoping and promising to cure our sufferings, is in the end reduced to desiring, and vainly desiring, to cure itself.

Now, in view of all this, I would ask you to state the grounds of your belief that the present age is nearer to the attainment of perfection than any previous age was, and better fitted for its attainment. Is it in consequence of the greater knowledge of the truth which characterises it?—a knowledge which, as we have seen, is most incompatible with the happiness of man. Or is it, perchance, because nowadays some few individuals have discovered that it is

better not to philosophise, without, however, having the power to abstain from it? But be it remembered that primeval man did not philosophise; and savages wholly eschew it. What other means, not possessed by our ancestors or more efficacious than they possessed, have we for the purpose of attaining or approximating to perfection?

TIMANDER.

Many, and of great efficacy. • To detail them would necessitate a lengthy disquisition.

ELEANDER.

Well, let them be for the present, and let us return to my particular case. I grant that in my writings I propound certain hard and mournful facts; whether to relieve my mind by their utterance, or to console myself by deriding them. But, on the other hand, in the same writings I never cease to deplore, to deprecate, and to reprehend, the study of that miserable and freezing truth, the knowledge of which is the source either of indifferentism and apathy, or of spiritual baseness, iniquity in action, and perversity of morals. And I invariably applaud and extol those views which, even if erroneous, generate noble thoughts and bear fruit in actions at once magnanimous, virtuous, useful to man, and conducive to the public and the private good. I praise those bright and joyous illusions which, shadowy though they be, impart a savour to life; nay, I even commend the delusions of antiquity, so different from those of barbarism, which latter alone should have succumbed to the influence of modern civilisation and philosophy. But these two latter agencies, as I think, exceeding their legitimate functions after the manner of all things human, have delivered us from one barbarism only to plunge us into

another no less pernicious than the first, though born not of ignorance but of knowledge and reason; a barbarism which manifests itself less in physical than in moral conditions; and while it is more subtle and subjective in its nature, it is less productive of vigorous and downright action. But however this may be, I fear that the kindly delusions of antiquity, though they might be conducive to the well-being of civilised society, can never be restored.

As to the perfection of man, I vow to you that if we had attained to or approached it, I should have written at least a volume in praise of the human race. But inasmuch as it has not fallen to my lot to see this consummation; and as I have no hope of witnessing it, all I can do is to bequeath a portion of my estate, to be applied to the following object—namely, that as soon as the human race shall have attained to perfection, a panegyric in its honour be composed and publicly recited every year; and that a temple in the ancient style be erected for its worship; or at least a statue, or whatever else my administrators and assigns may judge to be most appropriate.

COPERNICUS.

A DIALOGUE DRAMA IN FOUR SCENES.

SCENE I.—*The First Hour of Day and the Sun.*

FIRST HOUR.

Good morning, your Excellency.

SUN.

Nay, rather good night.

FIRST HOUR.

Your horses are ready.

SUN.

Well?

FIRST HOUR.

The morning star has been up for some time.

SUN.

She may come or go as she likes.

FIRST HOUR.

What means your Excellency by this?

SUN.

I mean that I wish you would not bother me.

FIRST HOUR.

But, your Excellency, the night has already lasted so long that it can't last any longer; and if we delay any further, I would have your Excellency to consider that some slight confusion may ensue.

SUN.

Let what may ensue—I shan't stir.

FIRST HOUR.

Oh, your Excellency, what words are these? Does your Excellency feel unwell?

SUN.

No, no; I feel nothing except that I am determined not to move; and you may go about your business.

FIRST HOUR.

But how ever can I go about my business unless your Excellency comes too, seeing that I am the First Hour of the day; and how can the day come unless your Excellency deign-as usual to rise?

SUN.

“ If you won’t be the First Hour of the day, you can be the First Hour of the night; or else the Hours of the night can do double duty, and you and your companions can have a spell of idleness. The fact is, I am sick of this continual wheeling round to give light to a few animalcules which live on a handful of mud so small that I, who have pretty good eyesight, can’t even make it out; and this very night I have made up my mind to take no more trouble about it; and if men want to have a light, they can keep their fires going, or make what other arrangement they like.

FIRST HOUR.

And what arrangement does your Excellency suppose the poor little creatures could make? To keep their lamps constantly lighted, or to provide a sufficient number of candles to burn all day, would be frightfully expensive. If, indeed, they had yet discovered the way to make that sort of combustible air by means of which they might light their streets and shops and houses at a trifling expense, the case would not be so bad. But the fact is that three hundred years, more or less, have yet to pass before men shall invent that expedient; and long before that they will have used up all their oil and wax and pitch and tallow, and will have nothing left to burn.

SUN.

Let them go hunt fire-flies and catch glow-worms.

FIRST HOUR.

And then the cold. How ever will they manage about that? For, deprived of the help which they used to get from your Excellency, all the forests on earth would not make fire enough to warm them. Besides which, they would die of hunger, for then the earth would no longer yield its fruits. And thus, in the course of a few years the very breed of these poor animals would be lost; for after they had groped about for a while, looking for something to eat and to warm them, it would not be long before they would have eaten up everything they could possibly swallow, and used up their last snark of fire, and then they would all die off in the dark, frozen up like bits of rock crystal.

SUN.

What does all this matter to me? Am I the nurse of the human race? Or perhaps you think I am their cook, that I must prepare and dress their victuals. And why should I trouble my head if a few invisible vermin, millions of miles away, can't see, or can't stand the cold, without my light? And besides, if I must needs serve as a stove or a fireplace, so to say, to this precious human family, and if they wish to warm themselves, I think the least thing they can do is to come and stand round the stove themselves, not that the stove should go whirling about their house. Therefore, if the Earth has any need of my presence, let her bestir herself and take the trouble to procure it. As for

me, I have no need of anything from her, that I should go running after her.

FIRST HOUR.

Your Excellency would imply, if I understand aright, that now the Earth must undertake for herself the labour which hitherto your Excellency has undergone for her.

* SUN.

Ay, now, and for ever in future.

FIRST HOUR.

Assuredly in this matter your Excellency is fully justified, and you have also full power to please yourself about it. But for all that, I would have your Excellency to deign to reflect how many fine things would have to be sacrificed in carrying out this arrangement of yours. Day would no longer have its gay gilded car, with the team of splendid steeds which used to bathe in Ocean; and, to say nothing else, we poor Hours would no longer have a place in Heaven, and, from being celestial nymphs, we should become mere terrestrial handmaids, if indeed, as I judge more likely, we do not resolve into thin air and vanish. But however these things may be, the difficulty will be to persuade the Earth to revolve at all, since she is not used to it, and it will seem to her very hard to have to be perpetually toiling and whirling round, after never having stirred a foot from the beginning of time till now; and if your Excellency, as it would seem, is beginning to yield to laziness, the Earth, from all I can hear, is no whit more inclined to exert herself than ever she was.

SUN.

Ay, but now necessity will spur her, and make her skip and run with a will. However, our best plan will be to find some poet or philosopher to persuade her to move, or, failing persuasion, to force her. For after all, this sort of business is chiefly in the hands of these gentry, and in such matters they can do almost anything they please. It was the poets who, long ago when I was young and weak enough to listen to them, wheedled me with their ditties, and induced me of my own free will, as if for sport, or as if, forsooth, it was an honourable exercise, to undertake the ridiculous toil of revolving madly, big and stout as I am, round a grain of sand! But now that I'm come to years of discretion, and have turned my attention to philosophy, I aim in all things at the useful, not the beautiful; and the fade of the poets, if they do not positively enrage me, only move me to mirth. Nowadays, before I do a thing, I want to know the reason why, and to be assured that it is a sensible thing to do. And I find no reason to prefer a life of exertion to one of ease and comfort, since no amount of exertion is calculated to yield any fruits worth the trouble incurred; nay, for the matter of that, the world contains no fruits worth two brass farthings.

Therefore I have resolved for the future to leave toil and trouble to others, and to live quietly at home doing nothing. This change in my views is, as I have told you, partly due to my being older and more sensible than I was, but it has been brought about chiefly by the philosophers, a sort of folk who of late have begun to exercise considerable and growing influence. Accordingly, being now minded that the Earth should bestir herself, and take to running round instead of me, I am a little divided how to proceed in order to induce her to do so.

On the one hand, I half think a poet would suit my purpose better than a philosopher, since the poets, now with one fiction, now with another, create the idea that the universe is a wonderful thing, and very fair and pleasing, and so forth. Thus they give rise to a thousand bright hopes and pleasing illusions, and thereby stimulate others to exertion ; whereas the philosophers do just the reverse.

But on the other hand, since the philosophers have begun to gain the ascendant, I am doubtful whether a poet would be likely to be listened to by the Earth, any more than I myself would listen to one of them ; or even if he did get a hearing, I doubt whether he would make any practical impression. So, on the whole, I think we had better employ a philosopher on this job ; for though this class is little fitted, and still less inclined, to incite others to any useful sort of activity, yet, in an extreme case like the present, one of them might possibly for once employ his talents to some purpose.

It is true that the Earth may perhaps think it better to go to perdition at once than to have to undergo this new toil ; and, for my part, I should not blame her if she did. However, we shall see. So now I'll tell you what you've got to do. You must go down there to the Earth, or, if you prefer it, you can send one of your sisters down—whichever of them you like. The chances are she'll find one of these philosophers standing outside his house, staring at the stars, especially on a night like this which has continued so unusually long. Well, if she does, she must pick him up, whip him on her back, and fetch him herë, and I'll work him to my purpose. D'ye understand me ?

FIRST HOUR.

Yes, your Excellency. You shall be obeyed.

SCENE II.—*Copernicus, on the terraced roof of his house, gazing at the eastern quarter of the heavens through a roll of paper, telescopes not having yet been invented*

COPERNICUS.

Prodigious! Either all the clocks and watches have gone wrong, or the sun ought to have been up more than an hour ago, and yet there's not so much as a glimmer in the east, although the sky is cloudless and clear as a looking-glass! All the stars are shining as if it was midnight. Let me to my *Almagest*,¹ or my *Sacrobosco*,² for the explanation of this phenomenon. I have often heard of the night that Jove passed with the wife of Amphitryon; and I remember, too, reading the other day in a modern book written by a Spaniard, how the Peruvians tell that once, long ago, there fell in their country a night of prodigious length, and that at last the sun issued from a certain lake which they call Titicaca. Till now I have always regarded these stories as fables, as all sensible men do. But now that I find reason and science so baffled that they seem scarcely worth a jot, I am prepared to believe anything; and I have a good mind to go round to all the lakes and puddles in the neighbourhood to see if I can fish up the sun. But hark! What's this rustling I hear, like the sound of the pinions of some great bird?

SCENE III.—*The Last Hour and Copernicus.*

LAST HOUR.

Copernicus, I am the Last Hour.

COPERNICUS.

The Last Hour! Has it come to that? Well, I suppose

¹ See Note 41.

² See Note 42.

I must submit. All I ask is a few minutes to make my will, and set my affairs in order before I die.

LAST HOUR.

Die! Who talked of dying? You don't suppose I'm the last hour of your life, do you?

COPERNICUS.

What on earth are you, then? The last canonical hour of the breviary?

LAST HOUR.

Ay, I doubt not that is the hour you like best, when you're in your stall in the choir.¹

COPERNICUS.

But who told you I was a canon? And how come you to know me? Nay, you called me just now by my name.

LAST HOUR.

I got some particulars about you from some people down there in the street. And I am the **Last Hour** of the day.

COPERNICUS.

Ah, I see it all now. I suppose the **First Hour** is ill, and that's the reason why there's no sign of day yet.

LAST HOUR.

Let me explain. In future there will be no more day at all, neither to-day nor to-morrow nor ever after, unless you take measures to provide otherwise.

¹ See Note 43.

COPERNICUS.

A good joke indeed! What have *I* to do with the trouble of making day?

LAST HOUR.

I'll tell you all about that presently. But first of all you must come along with me without delay to the house of my master the Sun. On the way I'll tell you all I can about this affair, and the rest will be fully explained to you by his Excellency when we arrive.

COPERNICUS.

All right. But how about the journey there? Unless I am greatly mistaken, it must be a good long way, and how am I to carry provisions enough to keep me from dying of hunger some years before we get there? Besides, so far as I know, I doubt if his Excellency's estates produce enough food to provide me with a single breakfast.

LAST HOUR.

Oh, never fear. You won't have to stay long with the Sun; and as to the journey, that won't take more than a second or two, for, if you didn't know it before, you must now know that I am a spirit.

COPERNICUS.

Perhaps so. But I am a body.

LAST HOUR.

Tut, tut; you needn't trouble yourself about these matters, for you're not a metaphysician. Here—mount on my shoulders, and leave the rest to me.

COPERNICUS.

Then here goes. No sooner said than done. But I *am* curious to know how this little adventure is to end.

SCENE IV.—*Copernicus and the Sun.*

COPERNICUS.

Most illustrious sir!

SUN.

Forgive me, Copernicus, if I don't ask you to be seated. We don't use chairs here. But we'll soon get through our business. You have already heard from my handmaid how the case stands. I, on my part, from what the girl tells me of your intelligence, am of opinion that you are the very man for the purpose I have in view.

COPERNICUS.

Sir, I perceive many difficulties in this business.

SUN.

The difficulties need not discourage a man of your stamp; nay, it is said that difficulties only increase the courage of spirited men. But, after all, what are these difficulties?

COPERNICUS.

First of all, great as is the power of philosophy, I doubt if it is great enough to persuade the Earth to set to and take to motion instead of sitting still, and to exert herself instead of being at rest; especially in these days which are anything but heroic times.

SUN.

Well, if you cannot persuade her to do so, I suppose you can force her.

COPERNICUS.

Willingly, illustrious sir, willingly would I do so if I were a Hercules, or even an Orlando, and not a simple canon of Varmia.

SUN

What has that to do with it? Have I not heard of an ancient mathematician of yours who used to say that if he could only get a spot outside the Earth to serve for a fulcrum, he would undertake from thence to move Heaven and Earth.¹ Now you are not required to move Heaven, and here you are in a place which is well outside the Earth. So, unless you are prepared to admit that you are inferior to that mathematician, you cannot fail to move her, whether she will or no.

COPERNICUS.

My lord, the thing could be done ; but it would require a lever of such a prodigious length that not I only, but your Excellency himself, rich though you be, could not afford half the cost of the material necessary for its manufacture, let alone the cost of making it. But there is another difficulty more formidable still, which I shall now point out to you,—in fact, the whole undertaking bristles with difficulties. Hitherto the Earth has occupied the principal position in the universe ; that is to say, the central point of the entire system. You also know that she stands fixed and motionless, with nothing to do but

¹ Archimedes.

to look about her in space, while all the other spheres in the universe, no matter what their magnitude and splendour, have hitherto always revolved around her on every side with a velocity and momentum absolutely bewildering even to think of. Thus, all created things being apparently occupied in her service, the universe has heretofore worn the appearance of some great court, in the midst of which the Earth was seated as on a throne, while all the other globes in creation resembled courtiers, or guards, or domestics, all ministering to her in their respective capacities and offices. In this way, the Earth has always regarded herself as the Empress of the universe; and to tell the truth, while the condition of things was such as I have described, it was impossible to say that she was unreasonable in this supposition; and I, for one would not deny that her estimate of herself was fairly justified.

And now, as to her inhabitants, I need hardly tell you that we men naturally regard ourselves, and always will regard ourselves, as something more than the foremost and most important of all earthly creatures; since each one of us, down to the very beggar in his rags, with not so much as a crust of dry bread to gnaw, looks upon himself as a sort of emperor; and not such a paltry thing as your emperors of China, or Germany, or even of half a world, as the Roman emperors were; but an emperor of the universe, including the sun, and the planets, and all the stars, visible and invisible. Nor only that, but as the final cause of stars, and planets, of your Excellency himself, and of all things; and as the sole object for which they all exist. But now, if we wish the Earth to abandon that central and fixed position, and to take to movement and continual exertion, like any other sphere, and, in

a word, to become one of the ordinary planets, the necessary result will be that her Terrestrial Majesty, and their Majesties mankind, will have to descend from their thrones and abdicate their royalty; while they retain their rags and their miseries, which I can tell you are neither few nor slight.

SUN.

My good Don Nicholas, I would ask you what we are to conclude from all this rigmarole. Possibly you have some scruples of conscience about this business, and regard my proposal as a sort of high treason against her Terrestrial Majesty, as you are pleased to call her.

COPERNICUS.

No, your Excellency; for, so far as I can remember, no mention of any such conceivable case of high treason is to be found either in the Codes, or in the Digest, or in any other treatise on civil law, whether imperial or international, or natural. But what I wish to point out is that this undertaking of ours is not one of purely material scope and tendency, as at first sight it seems to be, and that its effects will not be confined to the domain of physical existence alone, but that it will involve a positive revolution in the grades and dignities of the cosmic hierarchy, and in the relative precedence, so to speak, of created things; that it is calculated to disturb the very destinies of whole races of sentient beings; and, for these reasons, it is likely also to revolutionise metaphysical science itself, together with all that pertains to the province of speculative knowledge. The result of all this will be that, in the altered condition of things now contemplated by you, men, if they retain the power or the will to reason coherently, will

discover that their position in the cosmogony of the universe has become a very different one from that which they have hitherto held, or, at all events, imagined that they held.

SUN.

My son, these considerations cause me little uneasiness, for I have just about as much respect for metaphysics as I have for physics, or, for the matter of that, for alchemy, or necromancy, if you prefer it. Men will just have to make up their minds to be what they are, and no more; and if they cannot be content with their true position in the scale of the universe, they can go on reasoning and philosophising in defiance of it, and arguing in sheer despite of the evidences of things; a course for which I confess they have a peculiar aptitude. Thus they will doubtless continue to fancy themselves whatever they please, whether barons, or dukes, or emperors, or anything else they like. They shall be welcome to draw what consolation they can from these notions, and their opinions will not affect me a jot.

COPERNICUS.

Well, well; enough said about the Earth, and about men. But now, your Excellency, I would have you to consider how your design is likely to affect the other planets. When they shall see the Earth acting in all respects just as they do, and in fact become one of themselves, I venture to think they will no longer remain content with their present naked and unadorned condition, or be willing to continue unoccupied and forbidding as they have hitherto been. They will take it ill that the Earth alone should enjoy so many ornaments and advantages, and will claim that they too should have their rivers, and seas, and mountains, and

plants, and, among other things, animals and other inhabitants ; arguing that there is no reason why they should any longer be in any respect inferior to the Earth. Now, here you will find yourself face to face with another prodigious revolution in the condition of the universe, and will have on your hands an infinite number of new races and populations, which will shortly spring up on all sides, like so many mushrooms.

SUN.

Let them come, if you have no objection. And be they as many and as numerous as they may, I have light and heat enough for them all, without the necessity of any additional expenditure in fuel ; and the universe shall have abundance of food, clothing, quarters, and entertainment, without having to run into debt.

COPERNICUS.

But I beseech your Excellency to look into this matter a little more closely, and you will perceive another inconvenience which must spring from your design. The stars, when they shall see that you have finally seated yourself, and this not on a stool, but on a throne, and have gathered round you this brilliant court and galaxy of planets, will not only wish to sit down and rest themselves too, but will wish to reign also. Now, in order to reign, it is necessary to have subjects ; so they too will insist on having planets of their own, just as you have ; and each will expect a set of planets all to himself. And each of these new planets will have to be furnished and inhabited as well as the Earth. Now, in these circumstances, I need not point out to you what would be the condition of the poor human race, which would have been already reduced by your scheme to com-

parative insignificance in relation to the existing universe. Just consider what it would be degraded to, should so many new worlds burst into being, so that even the smallest bit of a star in the Milky Way would have a system of its own.

However, leaving all this out of consideration, and having regard to your own interests alone, I would remind you of one thing in particular. Hitherto you have been, if not the first sphere in existence, certainly the second; that is to say, the next in rank after the Earth; and you have never had any equal, seeing that the stars have never presumed to enter into rivalry with you. But in this new state of affairs which you propose to introduce, you would have as many equals and rivals as there would be stars with their systems. so that I would have you to beware lest this innovation which you wish to bring about, should result in prejudice to your own dignity.

SUN.

Have you forgotten what was said by your own Cæsar when, as he was crossing the Alps, he came upon that little miserable hamlet of wretched barbarians, and exclaimed that he would rather be the chief man in that group of hovels than be the second in Rome? So I, too, would rather be the first sphere in our existing system than the second in a grander universe. But it is not ambition which moves me to desire to change the present state of things. No, my sole motive is the desire of rest; or to speak more accurately, sheer laziness. So that, as to my having equals or not, or occupying the highest rank or the lowest, I am pretty well indifferent; since, unlike Cicero, I prefer my ease to my dignity.

COPERNICUS.

Most illustrious sir, so far as depends on me, I shall do

all in my power to secure for you this ease. And yet, even if I succeed in doing so, I doubt if you will enjoy it long. In the first place, I am almost certain that before many years shall have elapsed you will be constrained to revolve on your own axis like the wheel of a draw-well, or like any grindstone, although without moving from your position. And then I have a suspicion that, at the last, after a greater or smaller interval, you will have not only to wheel on your own axis, but also to describe an orbit, though not indeed round the Earth; but what difference will that make to you? Possibly your mere rotatory movement will lead to your revolving round something. But however that may be, and notwithstanding the difficulty of the undertaking and the various objections to it, if you are determined on your present project, I'll do what I can to serve you; and then, if I do not succeed, you will see that the thing was beyond my power; and will, at all events, not charge me with want of spirit.

SUN.

Well said, my Copernicus. Do your best.

COPERNICUS.

There remains only one point which gives me a little uneasiness.

SUN.

Well, what may that be?

COPERNICUS.

It is that I should not like to get into trouble over this job, and get burnt alive for it, like a phoenix; for in that case I am pretty certain I should not revive from my ashes

like that bird, and should never again look on your lordship's face.

SUN.

Hark ye, Copernicus. You know that in former times, before you philosophers were born, and when poetry held the field, I used sometimes to pose as a prophet. Well, let me now play this part once more, and for the last time; and on the strength of my former reputation in that line, I adjure you to believe me. I tell you then that after your time one or two of those who shall approve of the work you are about to do may come in for a little roasting, or the like; but, so far as I know, you yourself will not suffer any unpleasant consequences for this business. But if you wish to make sure of this, take my advice—dedicate your forthcoming book on the subject to the Pope.¹ By doing this, I promise you you'll not so much as lose your canonry.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN PLOTINUS AND PORPHYRIUS.

"ONE day I, Porphyrius,² having contemplated the design of putting an end to my existence, Plotinus divined my thoughts, and coming to me unexpectedly in my house, he assured me that such an idea did not proceed from the conclusions of a sound brain, but from a condition of morbid melancholy. With that he advised me to seek change of scene." — *Extract from the "Life of Plotinus" by Porphyrius.*

¹ See Note 44.

² See Note 45.

The same incident is related in the *Life of Porphyrius*, written by Eunapius,¹ who adds that Plotinus set forth in a book the arguments which he had employed with Porphyrius on that occasion.

PLOTINUS.

Porphyrius, you know that I am your friend, and you know how much I love you. Therefore you cannot be surprised if I at all times observe your words and deeds, and all your proceedings, with that interest which is born of the fact that you are ever in my thoughts. For many days now I have noticed that you are very pensive and sad, and have a strange look about you, and that from time to time you let fall ominous expressions. In fine, without further preamble or circumlocution, I suspect you have in your mind some sinister intention.

PORPHYRIUS.

What mean you by this?

PLOTINUS.

I mean that I suspect you cherish a sinister design against yourself—a deed of a nature too horrible to name. Oh, my Porphyrius, deny it not, wrong not so the love we have so long borne towards each other. I know well that I displease you by touching this subject, and that you would prefer to keep your purpose concealed. But in a matter so momentous I could not be silent, nor ought you to object to discuss it with one who loves you like himself. Let us then discuss it calmly and weigh the arguments concerning it. Thus will you unburden your soul to me, and give vent to your complaints and woes. I deserve no

¹ See Note 46.

less at your hands, and when we have investigated the matter I am the last who would prevent you from doing that which we may find to be reasonable, and calculated for your welfare.

PORPHYRIUS.

I have never yet refused compliance with a request of yours, Plotinus ; and now I will confess to you that which I would rather have kept secret, and which nothing would induce me to confess to any other man. I admit then that your conjecture as to my present intention is correct. If it be your wish that we should engage in a discussion on the theme, I will consent, though such a discussion is repugnant to me. I hold that such subjects are best left in profound silence, and that in the presence of such thoughts the mind loves to be alone, and to retire into itself more than in any other circumstances. But I will do as you wish ; nay, I myself will open the discussion, and I will do so by saying that my present inclination proceeds from no misfortune that has happened to me or which I apprehend as likely to overtake me, but solely from a general disgust of life ; from a tedium which oppresses me like an actual pain or spasm ; from the perception, nay more than that, from the visible spectacle, and taste, and feeling of the vanity of everything which occurs to me throughout each day. So intense is this feeling, that not my intellect alone, but my every sentiment is, so to say, saturated with it. Nor can you allege that this condition of my mind is unreasonable, although I admit that it may possibly be due in part to some physical disturbance within me. I contend that it is most reasonable, nay, I affirm that any *other* mental condition, any other view of existence, any sentiment which would attribute to life and human things any

substantial character whatever, must be more or less incompatible with reason, and can have no better basis than some illusion or erroneous conception. No condition is, in fact, more reasonable than this condition of disgust of life. All pleasures are vain. Pain itself, I refer to that of the mind, is for the most part vain also; since, when we consider its causes and its true nature, it is found to have little or no substantial reality. The same applies to fear; and the same may be said of hope. But weariness of existence being born of the vanity of all things, is never imaginary, never an illusion, never based on what is false. In short, it may be said that, all things else being vain, disgust of life represents all that is substantial and real in the life of man.

PLOTINUS.

Be it so. I will not contradict you on this head. But we have now to consider the specific act which you are meditating, and we must do so strictly, and as regards its own essence. I will not remind you of the dictum of Plato, that man is not justified in acting like a runaway slave, and removing himself by his own act and will from the limits of that prison, so to say, in which he has been placed by the will of the gods,—or in other words, that he may not take away his own life.

PORPHYRIUS.

I pray you, Plotinus, let us for the present leave Plato alone, with his doctrines and his theories. It is one thing to expound and applaud and defend certain opinions in the Schools and in books, and it is quite another to apply them in the practice of life. Let it suffice that I approve and subscribe to the teaching of Plato in the Schools and in

books, since such is the custom of the day. But as applied to the conduct of life I cannot approve them, nay, I abominate them.

I know it is said that in promulgating those doctrines of his, touching a future life, he did so with the view that men, being plunged in doubts as to their possible condition after death, might by that very uncertainty, and by the fear of future punishment, be restrained from injustice and evil deeds in this life. But if I thought that he was the author of these doubts and these beliefs, and that they were his invention, I should say, 'Oh, Plato, see how nature, or destiny, or necessity, or whatever power may be the author or ruler of the universe, is and has ever been the enemy of our species. Many considerations, indeed, might cast a doubt on the reality of that paramount position which we, on other grounds, claim to occupy among all animals; but assuredly no consideration can rob us of that premiership which old Homer assigned to us—the premiership of woe. Nevertheless Nature mercifully ordained a medicine for our ills—death,—a remedy which by the less intelligent was little to be feared, and by all others was greatly to be desired. And in truth it could not fail to be an inexpressible comfort to us in our troubled life, to look forward to its end. But you, with this terrible doubt which you have awakened in the minds of men, have robbed this thought of all its sweetness, and made it the bitterest of all. It is due to you that the most wretched of mortals now dread the haven even more than the tempest; and shrink from that sole remedy for all their ills, that sole rest for the sufferings and pangs of life, which death held out. You have been to men more cruel than destiny or necessity or nature. And since these doubts can never be resolved, and since our

souls can never be relieved from them, you have brought your fellow-creatures for ever to a condition which invests death with nameless terrors, and renders it more dreadful than life. It is your work that, whereas all other animals die without fear, tranquillity and security of mind are now for ever banished from the last hours of man. This, this alone, oh Plato, was wanted to fill up the cup of man's unhappiness.

Moreover, the object you had in view, that is to say, to restrain men from iniquity, has altogether failed. The doubts and fears you have conjured up do indeed terrify all men in their last hours, when they are no longer capable of doing harm. In the heyday of life too they frequently terrify the good, who have no wish to do harm. At that time, too, these doubts and fears terrify the timid and the feeble, who have neither natural inclination nor spirit and strength for violence and wrong-doing. But the bold, the strong, those who are little under the influence of imagination, in a word, all those who most require some curb in addition to the laws of society, *these* are never terrified at any period of life by your doubts and fears, or restrained by them from iniquity; as we see by daily example, and as the experience of the ages proves. Good laws, and still more, education and culture, tend to maintain integrity and mildness in human society; since persons redeemed and softened by civilisation, and accustomed to reflection, and to the exercise of their judgment, almost by necessity abhor to do violence to their fellows, or to stain their hands in their blood. Such persons are, for the most part, indisposed to all wrong-doing; and if any of them be ever so disposed, they are rarely inclined to incur the risks involved in contravention of the laws. But threatened consequences of an imaginary character, and gloomy theories as to

formidable possibilities, have no such effect; on the contrary, as is seen in the case of the extravagant cruelties and tortures sometimes resorted to by States, they tend but to intensify the depravity of the human mind, and to increase its ferocity; the two chief foes and pests of human society.

‘But you will say that you have also held forth a promise of future reward to the good—what reward, I would ask? A condition of inconceivable tedium; a state of existence still less tolerable than our present life. The bitterness and intensity of your threatened punishments are indeed plain to all; but the sweetness of your promised rewards is shadowy and concealed, and incapable of being appreciated by the mind of man. The hope of such rewards could have no efficacy in alluring us to rectitude and virtue; and in truth, if very few malefactors are deterred from vice by the fear of your horrible hell, I venture to affirm that no truly good man would be moved to virtue by the hope of your colourless heaven. Such a state cannot present itself to our imagination as a thing to be desired. And moreover, although even the assured and certain expectation of such a heaven would afford very slender satisfaction, I would ask you what certainty or assured hope of it does your system hold out, even to the virtuous and just, if that Minos of yours, and your Eacus and Rhadamanthus, those rigorous and inexorable judges, are incapable of pardoning the smallest shadow of a fault?—what man, I would ask, can be surely conscious of a life so absolutely sinless as you require? Hence, the attainment of your promised reward, poor as it is, amounts almost to an impossibility; and the consciousness of even the purest and noblest life will not suffice to save a man, in his last hours, from the uncertainties of his future state, and from the terror of your threatened

chastisements.' Thus by your doctrines, fear, predominating immeasurably over hope, becomes the master of man; and the ultimate result of such teachings comes to this, that the human race, a mournful example of unhappiness in this life, may no longer look forward to death as the end of its sufferings, but must expect, after it, to be much more miserable still. By all this, oh Plato, you have surpassed in cruelty not merely nature and destiny, but the most ferocious tyrants, and the most pitiless butchers the world has ever known!

'But what barbarity can be compared with that canon of yours that it is not lawful for man to terminate his sufferings, anxieties and woes, by overcoming the natural terror of death, and voluntarily casting off life? It is true that other animals evince not the desire to terminate their existence; but *their* sufferings are confined within far narrower limits than is the varied unhappiness of man, and possibly if these animals had such a desire, it is doubtful if they would have the resolution to give effect to it. But if such a wish were to arise in the breasts of the brutes, there would be no impediment to its gratification; no law forbids *them* to die, no torturing doubts would rob *them* of the power of fleeing from their woes. Thus in this respect too you would render our lot inferior to that of the beasts; and that liberty which they possess, if they were disposed to avail themselves of it, that liberty which Nature herself, so ungenerous in her customary dealings with man, has not denied to us, is now withheld from us by you. And the result is that the sole species of living creatures which experiences a desire for death, is also the sole species which is denied the liberty to die. Nature, destiny, and fortune scourge us fiercely and continually, to our distraction and incalculable suffering; and then *you* must come upon the scene, and tie our hands,

and fetter our feet, so that we can neither ward off their attacks nor withdraw ourselves from their blows.

‘In truth, when I muse on the immensity of human misery, I feel that your doctrines are to blame for it more than all things else; and that men have much more cause to complain of you than of Nature. She, to tell the truth, destined us to a miserable existence, but at the same time she gave us power to terminate it whenever we pleased. But that misery cannot justly be termed very great which it is in our power to render very brief; and again, even supposing the sufferer cannot make up his mind to quit his life, the mere thought that it is in his power whenever so disposed to remove himself from his misery, would be such a comfort, and such an alleviation of any conceivable calamity, that, by virtue of it, all calamities would be easy to bear. Thus the most intolerable aspect of our unhappiness consists in this doubt, lest, in voluntarily putting an end to our lives, we may fall into a state of misery greater than that which we would flee from. And not only greater, but of such ineffable atrocity and such endless duration, that even though our present sufferings are certain, and that other condition uncertain, still the fear of the latter naturally exceeds, beyond all proportion or comparison, the sense of any conceivable trial in this life. Now, Plato, it was easy for you to awaken these doubts, but the human race itself will be extinguished sooner than they will be resolved. So that nothing was ever produced, and nothing is likely in the future to be produced, so calamitous and fatal to the happiness of the human race as your intellect.’

Such would be my indictment of Plato, if I thought that he was the author or inventor of such doctrines. But well I know he was not. However, enough has been said on this subject, and I propose we drop it.

PLOTINUS. 1

Porphyrius, truly I love Plato, as you well know, but for all that I have no desire to entrench my argument in authority, least of all with you, and on such a topic. I prefer to appeal to reason. If I touched cursorily on that dictum of his, I did so more by way of preamble than anything else. And now, to resume the line of argument which I had in my mind, I would say that not Plato alone, or any other philosopher, would interdict suicide, but that Nature herself unmistakably teaches that it is not permitted to us to quit this world by our own mere will and our own act.

It is surely unnecessary for me to enlarge on this proposition, since a moment's reflection must show you that voluntary and unnecessary self-slaughter is palpably opposed to nature. Nay, to express the point better, such an act is the one most opposed to nature which man can commit. For it is plain that the whole structure of creation would be subverted, if the creature were to destroy himself. And to my mind the very notion seems repugnant to reason, that a man should use his vital powers to destroy life itself, and that existence should be employed for its own extinction.

Moreover, if any one thing has been plainly enjoined and commanded by nature, she has most strictly commanded man, and not only man, but all other creatures in the universe, above all things to study their self-preservation, and to seek to secure it by every means in their power, which is the direct opposite of self-destruction. And without appealing to any other argument, I would ask you, do we not all feel that our very nature instinctively draws us to hate death, to dread it, and to have a horror of it whether we will or no? Well then, since suicide is plainly contrary to the dictates of nature, and since the more we

reflect upon it the more clearly we perceive this fact, I cannot possibly persuade myself that it could, under any circumstances, be lawful.

PORPHYRIUS.

I have fully considered all this aspect of the question, since, as you have said, it would be impossible to overlook it, even on the most cursory consideration of the subject. Yet it seems to me that your arguments can be replied to by many others, and in more ways than one,—but I must study to be brief.

You say you doubt whether it is lawful for a man to take his own life. But I would ask you if it is lawful to be unhappy. Nature, you say, forbids suicide; but it seems to me a strange thing that she should lack the power or the will either to make me happy or to liberate me from misery, and yet should have the power to compel me to live. It is true she has implanted in us the instinct of self-preservation and a hatred of death. But no less has she implanted in us a hatred of misery and a love of happiness. Nay, these latter instincts are actually paramount to the former, since happiness is the end and aim of our every act and emotion; and we do not cling to life or shrink from death on account of anything intrinsically inherent in themselves, but solely in the hope of attaining happiness, or of avoiding suffering. How then can it be contrary to nature that I should flee from infelicity in the sole way left open to man, and should withdraw from existence; since so long as I live I cannot escape suffering? And how can it be true that nature forbids me to have recourse to death, which beyond all doubt is the greatest good within my reach; or to cast off a life which is manifestly oppressive and fraught with ills,

seeing that it holds out to me nothing but assured suffering, and leads me to inevitable woe?

PLOTINUS.

All your arguments fail to persuade me that self-slaughter is compatible with the laws of nature. Our inmost instincts too manifestly dictate aversion to death and abhorrence of it. The very beasts which, when not forced to the contrary by man, act in all things in conformity with the laws of nature, not only never have recourse to such an act, but evince the strongest repugnance to death, even when they are most oppressed and miserable. No creature but man is known to commit this act; and even among men, when they live in a natural manner, it is unknown. Among such it is held in abhorrence; if indeed it has ever been heard of or imagined by them. Such a crime is known only in artificial and perverted societies like ours, which do not regulate life by the strict dictates of nature.

PORPHYRIUS.

Well then, for the sake of argument let us assume that this action *is* contrary to nature. But what will this avail you, if the whole tenor of civilised life is found to be contrary to nature too? Compare our social system with that prevailing in the regions beyond India or in Ethiopia, where it is said that men have retained their primitive unsophisticated customs, and you will scarcely be disposed to think that those countries are peopled by the same race to which we belong. And as touching the metamorphosis which modern civilisation has wrought in us, the total change it has produced in our habits and sentiments, I have always thought that it has brought in its train a prodigious increase in unhappiness. It is certain, as you

said, that savages evince no disposition to suicide; nor does it even seem to occur to them that death could in any circumstances be desirable; whereas men moulded by our civilisation frequently desire it, and sometimes seek it. Well, if it be lawful for civilised man to live in a manner contrary to nature, and to be wretched in a degree which is opposed to nature, why is it not permitted to him to die in defiance of nature? For this new unhappiness, which is the result of our civilisation, cannot be escaped save by death alone.

As to returning to our primitive condition and to the mode of life designed for us by nature, this may be regarded as impracticable, or if practicable, it could only affect the external form of our lives; since as to the interior economy of our sentiments and habits, which is the thing mainly to be regarded, it would without doubt be absolutely impossible. What could be in its essence less natural than the use of medicines, or the operations of surgery? Both the one and the other, with all their methods, materials, and instruments, are far removed from what is natural, and they are unknown to the brutes and to savage man. Nevertheless, since the disorders which it is their office to remedy are themselves unnatural, and only spring from civilisation and the corruption of our manners, so these agencies, though not natural, are held to be convenient, and indeed indispensable. Just so with this matter of suicide. It too is calculated to liberate us from the unhappiness which results from our deviation from simplicity, and the fact of its being opposed to nature does not prove that it is reprehensible, since unnatural ills require unnatural remedies. And indeed it would be a hardship and an iniquity if Reason, which, in order to aggravate our distresses, is wont to oppose Nature in all

other things, were in this matter to become her accomplice, in order to compel us to continue in our misery, and rob us of this one last way of escape which is open to us, and which is pointed out to us by Reason herself.

The fact is this, Plotinus. That primitive nature of early man, and which is seen to-day amongst savage tribes, no longer exists in us. Reason and custom have produced in us another nature, which we have, and ever shall have, in place of the first. In the beginning it was not natural to man to seek death by his own hand; but then neither was it natural to him to desire death at all. Now, however, both these things have become natural to us; that is to say, conformable to our new nature, which is ever tending and moving, like our first nature, towards that which seems best for us, with the result that we often desire and seek that which is the greatest blessing to man—death. Nor is there anything wonderful in this; for our second nature is governed and directed for the most part by reason, and reason affirms as a thing most certain that death, far from being an evil, as suggested by the first impression of it, is in fact the sole remedy available for the cure of our ills; and the best and most desirable thing appointed to man.

And now I would ask you whether civilised men always regulate their actions by the standard of their primitive nature? Do they ever do so, in a single instance? Assuredly they do not. All our actions are governed, not by our primitive nature, but by our second nature; that is to say by reason. This being so, why should this one act of suicide be the sole exception to the rule, and be judged, not by reason and our second nature, but by our primitive nature? Why should that primitive nature which no longer furnishes the law of our life, pronounce a law as to our death? And if reason now governs our living, why

should she not also govern our dying? Do we not see that the voice of reason and the counsels of despair have the effect of extinguishing, especially in the most afflicted, that inborn horror of death whereof you spoke, and substitute in its place that yearning desire for it on which I dwelt. But granting the existence of this desire, which is opposed to our original nature; and granting the unhappiness which results from civilisation, which also is opposed to our original nature; it were manifestly absurd to insist on the validity of an alleged natural interdict against suicide. These considerations seem to me sufficient to prove that suicide is lawful. It remains to inquire whether it is profitable.

PLOTINUS.

On this head, Porphyrius, you need not dwell; for if this act could be regarded as lawful, I do not question its expediency; while an act which is unlawful could never be expedient. On the assumption that suicide is lawful, the question resolves itself into two given things, which is preferable, to suffer or not to suffer? Sure I am that a condition composed of suffering combined with happiness, or alternating with it, is one which all men would choose in preference to a condition in which both suffering and happiness were excluded. Pain alone is the desire, so intense the thirst, which the human mind feels for happiness. But this proposition does not fall within the terms of our present discussion, for happiness is in truth as unattainable as suffering is inevitable; a suffering, too, as continuous as is our insatiable desire for its opposite. And in this statement I leave out of account all those special and accidental sufferings to which men are exposed, and which are sure to happen, more or less, even to the most fortunate individuals. But, logically regarded,

a single suffering, however brief, which should be certain to overtake any man, would be sufficient, by the light of reason, to render death preferable to life; since that suffering could never be compensated, seeing that our life admits of no true good or happiness.

PORPHYRIUS.

To me it seems that mere tedium of life, and the absence of all hope of any amelioration in our condition, are sufficient to generate the desire to quit it, even in the case of those who are regarded as fortunate and prosperous. Nay, many a time have I wondered that we nowhere find mention made of Princes who have longed for death by reason of this weariness of life, and of mere satiety of their condition; as happened commonly enough, and still occasionally happens in the case of private individuals. Thus we read that when Hegesias, the philosopher of Cyrene, lectured on the misery of life, it was no uncommon thing for his auditors to go out and kill themselves—from which circumstance he acquired the title of *The Persuader to Death*; and it is said, as you doubtless know, that in the end King Ptolemy prohibited him from discoursing any more on that topic. It is true we read of sundry sovereigns, such as Mithridates, Cleopatra, Otho the Roman, and doubtless there may have been others, who committed suicide, but all of these were moved to it by calamity or suffering, and the desire to flee from still greater adversity. For my part, I should have thought that Princes would have been more prone than other persons to conceive a disgust of their condition and a weariness of all things, and a desire for death, since standing, as they do, on the very summit of what is called human felicity, possessing all those things which are regarded as the blessings of life, and

consequently having little or nothing to hope for, they can never look forward to any amelioration in their lot. Moreover, the present moment, however it may be characterised by prosperity, is seldom appreciated, and is too often attended by a certain gloom and dissatisfaction. The future alone promises satisfaction. But however this may be, it is plain that, setting aside the possibilities of a future state, that which restrains men from suicide, that which causes them to prefer life to death, is neither more nor less than a mere error in computation and proportion, so to speak, a miscalculation which they make in computing, and weighing, and comparing with each other, the respective advantages and drawbacks involved in that step. And this miscalculation is committed every time a man clings to life, or even consents to live and is satisfied with life, whether this be the result of his judgment or his will, or is purely accidental.

PLOTINUS. .

It may be so, Porphyrius. But, for all this, allow me to advise you, nay, suffer me to entreat you, as regards your present design, to hearken to the voice of nature rather than to that of reason. And by this I mean that primitive nature, mother of us all and of all created things, who, if indeed she has not given us many proofs of her love, if even she has made us unhappy, has yet been far less hostile and injurious to us than we ourselves have been, with our perverse intellect, our insatiable curiosity, our incessant speculations and discussions, our vain dreamy imaginations, and our miserable theories and doctrines. Moreover, she has at least done her best to mitigate our woes, by concealing, or at least disguising, the greater part of them. And although our divergence from our pristine state is great, and

though the power of nature in us is no longer what it was, yet it is not reduced to nothing ; nor are we ourselves so altered and perverted but that there still dwells in us something of the character of the men of antiquity. And, however unpalatable it may be to our pride, this must ever continue to be so. Thus that which you describe as a miscalculation, a palpable error in our reckoning, is yet committed continually ; and not merely by the stupid and by fools, but by the intelligent, the learned, and the wise ; and it will continue to be committed so long as the world lasts, unless Nature herself, who has produced our species, shall extinguish the instinct from which it proceeds ; which man and all his ratiocinations will never do.

And, believe me, this disgust of life of which you speak, this despair, this sense of the vanity of all things, and the futility of all solicitudes, this hatred of the world and of oneself, will not endure for ever, however conformable they may be to strict reason, and however irrational their opposite conditions may be. On the contrary, after a while, our views may easily undergo a change. Then, by degrees, if not suddenly, from causes apparently insignificant and scarcely perceptible, the appreciation of life may return, fresh hopes may be kindled in our breasts, and human affairs may resume their importance in our eyes, and appear worthy of some estimation, if not to the intellect of man, at least to the sentient part of his nature. And the effect of this will be that even those who are most acquainted with the truths of philosophy, and most convinced of the vanity of all things, will yet, in spite of reason, cling to life, and employ it like their neighbours ; since after all we are governed by our senses more than by our intellect.

Whether suicide be reasonable or whether it be unreasonable ; and whether or not it be unreasonable

to accommodate ourselves to the inevitable conditions of our existence, it is quite certain that self-destruction is an atrocious and inhuman act; and I would ask you, which is preferable: to be a monster by the light of reason, or to be a man by the light of nature?

Móreover, in such a matter as this, ought not a man to have some consideration for the feelings of friends and relations, of children and of parents, of his wife and even of the domestics who have long dwelt in his house, from all of whom death must part him for ever? Should he not feel a pang at the thought of such a separation; and ought he not to think of what all these persons must feel, not only for the loss of one whom they loved, or to whose presence they have become accustomed, but also on account of the shocking cause of his departure? I admit that the spirit of a wise man should not be too tender; and that he should not be accessible to compassion to such a degree as to be unduly disturbed by it, or to succumb improperly to its influence. It should not cause him to swerve from duty, to faint in a right purpose, or to be betrayed into acts unworthy of one who is fully and clearly persuaded of the necessities of life. But fortitude like this should be employed to sustain us in the inevitable accidents of fortune. It should never be abused for the purpose of removing ourselves, spontaneously and for ever, from the sight and society of those who are dear to us. To hold as nought the pangs of separation from loved ones, and the loss of relations and intimates and friends; to be impenetrable to such sentiments becomes not a wise man, but a savage. Coldly and callously to plunge your family and your friends into grief and horror by your own self-slaughter, is the act of one regardless of others, and too regardful of himself; and in a word, he who commits

suicide manifests no thought or care for others; he seeks nothing but his own ends, he casts to the winds all thought of those who are dear to him and all regard for his neighbours; so that this execrable act is an exhibition of the most sordid and inconsiderate self-love, such as the world cannot parallel.

In conclusion, Porphyrius, the ills of life are doubtless manifold and continual; but when, as in your case, there are no special and extraordinary calamities to complain of, and no bitter bodily pains to be endured, our ordinary trials are not so very hard to bear; especially by a wise and courageous man like you. And, in fact, life is in itself such an inconsiderable thing, that a man ought to concern himself little either about its retention or its loss. At the same time, without exhibiting too much solicitude as to either of these issues, he should recognise, and act on, any considerations, however slight, which may suggest the desirability of adhering to life. And this being so, how could you refuse a friend when he asks you to do so. Now, my dear Porphyrius, I most earnestly entreat you, by the memory of the years during which our friendship has endured, away with this thought. Oh, cause not so great a grief to your friends, who love you dearly; or to me who have no so dear a friend, no more sweet companion. I conjure you rather to help us in enduring the trials of life; not to desert us thus without a thought. Let us live, my Porphyrius, and comfort each other; and let us not refuse to submit to that portion of the sufferings of our race which destiny has appointed to us. Let us bear each other company, cheering one another, and mutually extending to each other the hand of help, so as to fulfil as best we may, the labour of life. Life itself will assuredly be brief; and when death comes, we shall not repine. In our last moments our friends

and companions will comfort us ; and we shall be cheered by the thought that after we are gone they will cherish our memory and love us still.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN ALMANAC VENDOR
AND A PASSER-BY.

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Almanacs ! new almanacs ! new calendars !—D'ye want an almanac, sir ?

PASSER-BY.

What,—almanacs for the new year ?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Ay, sir.

PASSER-BY.

Do you think the new year is going to be a happy one ?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Oh, sir, yes for certain.

PASSER-BY.

As happy as the one just closing ?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Oh, happier ; far happier.

PASSER-BY.

As happy as last year ?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Happier, sir ; much happier.

PASSER-BY.

Well, what former year will it resemble? Would it not content you that the new year should be like some of the former ones?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Oh no, sir; that would not please me at all.

PASSER-BY

How many new years have come and gone since you have been selling almanacs?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Some twenty, sir.

PASSER-BY.

And which of all these twenty years would you like the new one to resemble?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Well, sir, I could hardly say.

PASSER-BY.

Of all these years, can you not think of one which seemed to you particularly happy?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

To tell you the truth, sir, I can not.

PASSER-BY.

And yet life is a fine thing, is it not?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

All the world knows that, sir.

PASSER-BY.

Would you not gladly live over again all these twenty years; and all the years of your life, from the time you were born?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Oh, sir, I wish to God I could.

PASSER-BY.

But if you had to live over your life just as it was, with all the joys and sorrows which you went through, how then?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

No, sir, I wouldn't care to do that.

PASSER-BY.

Well, whose life would you like to live over again, mine, or the king's, or whose? or do you not think that I, or the king, or anybody else, would probably say just as you have done, and that nobody would choose to live over the life he had led?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

I half think so, sir.

PASSER-BY.

Then you would on no account have your life back again, saddled with that condition?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

By my faith no, sir, I would not.

PASSER-BY.

Then what sort of a life would you like to have back?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Such a life as God chose to give me; but saddled with no conditions.

PASSER-BY.

You would take your chance about it; and be content to know nothing as to what it might bring you; just as we know nothing about the new year?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Just so, sir.

PASSER-BY.

So, perhaps, would I; and so would all people probably. But I take it that this is a sign that, up to the present year, Fortune has treated us all but scurvily. For if no man would care to live his life over again on the condition that it should be the same life, with all the good and all the bad that his own life contained, it is plain that every man thinks that he has hitherto had more bad luck than good. From this it seems to me to follow that the life which is said to be such a fine thing cannot be the life which we know, but some life which we don't know; not our past life, but our future one. In the new year Fortune is to commence to be kind to you, and me, and all other men; and the happy life is to begin. Is that so?

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Let us hope so, sir.

PASSER-BY.

Well, show me your best almanac.

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Here you are, sir; this one is cheap at thirty *soldi*.

PASSER-BY.

Here's the money.

ALMANAC VENDOR.

Thank ye kindly, sir. Good day to you, sir.—Almanacs !
new almanacs ! new calendars !

DIALOGUE BETWEEN TRISTANO AND A
FRIEND.

FRIEND.

I have read your book. Doleful as usual.

TRISTANO.

Ay, as usual.

FRIEND.

Yes, doleful, disconsolate, and despairing. It is plain that
you regard this life as a sorry and odious thing.

TRISTANO.

How can I sufficiently regret it? But at that time that
particular folly was a fixed idea with me ; the delusion to
the effect that human life was unhappy.

FRIEND.

Unhappy? Well, suppose it is. But after all——

TRISTANO.

Oh, now I have quite changed my opinion. I now hold
that it is, on the contrary, supremely happy. But at the
time when I wrote that book I had the delusion to the
contrary in my head, as I have just told you. Nay, I was
so possessed by it, and so persuaded of its truth, that the last

thing I ever expected was to find any doubts entertained by anybody as to the opinions which I had expressed upon the subject ; since it seemed to me that the inner consciousness of every reader must necessarily render prompt testimony to the accuracy of every one of them.

I had indeed conceived it possible that some discussion might arise as to the utility or the reverse of my observations, but assuredly not as to their truth ; nay, in view of the universality of the ills which I had bewailed, I had fully expected that my doleful utterances would have found an echo in the breast of every one who read or heard them. But when I found that men flatly denied, not this or that particular proposition of mine, but the whole body of my teaching ; when they asserted that life is *not* unhappy, and that if it appeared so, to me, this must be the result of infirmity of mind, or some other misfortune affecting me in particular ; when I perceived this, I say, I was at first astounded, bewildered, petrified, - and for some days I thought I must be living in some other planet. But after a while I recovered my self-possession. Then I was at first a little indignant. Soon however I laughed, and said to myself that men are for the most part like husbands who, if they wish for a quiet life, must believe their wives to be faithful—that is to say, each man must believe that his own wife at least is so ; and so he does, even when half the world knows the contrary. Similarly he who has to live in any particular country, does well to believe it to be one of the best in the habitable globe ; and he usually persuades himself to do so. Thus, men in general, since they must live, perhaps do well to believe that life is a beautiful and precious thing, and so they persuade themselves to that effect ; and are indignant with any one who thinks otherwise.

For in fact the human race almost always believes, not

that which is true, but that which is, or appears to be, most flattering to its predilections. The human race, which has believed, and will believe, so many absurdities, will never believe that it knows nothing, is nothing, and has nothing to hope for. No philosopher who should inculcate these three facts would ever make his fortune, nor found a school, especially among the vulgar; since not only are all these three facts peculiarly unpalatable to those who have a high idea of life, but the two first of them are offensive to the pride of men; while the third, if not the other two likewise, requires courage and firmness of mind to enable a man to believe it. But men are for the most part cowardly, weak, ignoble, and narrow minded; ever docile in hoping for the best, since ever prone to change their views of what is good so as to suit the necessities of their position. They are ever ready also to lay down their arms, as Petrarch says, to Fortune;¹ to console themselves for any misadventure; to accept any compromise in place of that which is denied to them, or which they have lost; to accommodate themselves to the most iniquitous and atrocious conditions; and when they are destitute of desirable things, they are content to feed themselves with illusions which, though absolutely false, are yet as rooted and inveterate as if they were the most well-grounded verities in the world.

But, for my part, just as Southern Europe laughs at husbands who dote on faithless wives, so I laugh at the human race which is enamoured of life, and I think it unworthy of our manhood to live in a fool's paradise, and, in addition to the ills we endure, to be, as it were, the sport and mockery of nature and destiny. In all this, observe, I refer not to the illusions of the imagination, but to the illusions of the intellect. Whether these sentiments

¹ Part II., Canzone 5

of mine proceed from a morbid condition of the body, I know not; but this I do know, that sick or sound, I trample on the poltroonery of men; I reject vain consolations and puerile delusions; I have the courage to endure the privation of all hope, to gaze unflinchingly on the wilderness of life, to blink no whit of the misery of existence; and, in a word, to accept all the consequences of a philosophy which, if mournful, is at least true; and which, if profitable for nought else, yet wins for a resolute soul the proud satisfaction of stripping off the mantle from the veiled and mysterious cruelty of human destiny.

Such were my reflections when I saw this philosophy spurned and rejected by all men, just as they reject all things which are new and unpalatable to them. My musings, I say, took the above form, as if, forsooth that mournful philosophy had been invented by me. But then, on a little reflection, I remembered that it is no more new than the teaching of Solomon, or the imagery of Homer; and that all the philosophy and poetry of antiquity teem with figures and fables and proverbs in illustration of the extreme infelicity of men. Of these philosophers and poets, some say that man is the most miserable of all animals; some, that it were better never to have been born, or, being born, to die in the cradle; others, that they whom the gods love die young; with an infinite number of sentiments of the like nature. I called to mind, too, that from those times till now, all the poets and philosophers and other writers, great and small, have reiterated and enforced this teaching. So I was again filled with amazement at the whole aspect of the problem; and I passed some time between wonder and indignation and amusement, until at length on examining the subject more narrowly I finally arrived at the conclusion that the alleged infelicity of man

could be nothing more than an obstinate and deeply-rooted delusion of the human intellect, and that the explosion of that error, and the establishment in its stead of the actuality and truth of the happiness of life, was one of the grandest achievements and discoveries of the nineteenth century. Then I obtained some tranquillity; and I now frankly confess that I had been totally in error in my previous opinions.

FRIEND.

So now you have changed your opinion?

TRISTANO.

Surely; would you have me to dispute the truths discovered by the nineteenth century?

FRIEND.

And do you believe all that is believed in this age?

TRISTANO.

Assuredly. How can you doubt it?

FRIEND.

Then I presume you believe in the absolute perfectibility of man?

TRISTANO.

Undoubtedly.

FRIEND.

You believe, in fact, that the human race is daily advancing and improving?

TRISTANO.

Oh yes, certainly. It is true that at times I fancy that,

in point of physical strength, one man of antiquity was equal to four of modern times. And the body is the man ; for, to say nothing else, magnanimity, courage, passion, the power of action, the power to enjoy, and, in a word, all that goes to make life vivid and noble, depends on the vigour of the body, and, without it, cannot exist. One who is feeble in body is not a man ; he is a child ; nay he is worse, since it is his lot to stand by and see others live ; while all he can do is to chatter—life is not for him. Therefore in ancient times, and even in periods somewhat advanced in civilisation, bodily infirmity was regarded as positively ignominious. But with us, for a long time back, education has scorned to take any notice of the body, as a thing too base and abject for consideration. It thinks solely of the mind ; and in its exclusive culture of the mind, it destroys the body, forgetting that what is injurious to the latter reacts injuriously on the former.

And even if it were possible to remedy this defect in our systems of education, it would be impossible, without effecting a radical revolution in the structure of modern society, to remedy the defects which prevail in the other departments of public and private life, the arrangements of which, in ancient times, all tended to the development and perfection of the physical energies, whereas now their tendency is the very opposite. The result of all this is that, in comparison with the ancients, we are little better than children ; and that, when contrasted with us, the ancients stand forth more than ever as men. I speak not only of individuals of the one period as compared with individuals of the other ; but also of the masses, to use that convenient modern expression, in both periods. And I would add that, in their systems of morals and metaphysics, the ancients were incomparably more virile and manly than

we are. Nevertheless, of course I do not suffer myself to attach importance to such trivial matters as these, and I of course hold loyally to the belief that the human race is constantly advancing.

FRIEND.

I presume then, as a matter of course, that you believe knowledge and enlightenment to be continually on the increase.

TRISTANO.

Oh, most certainly; although I fancy I have perceived that just in proportion as the desire to learn increases, the willingness to study diminishes. And it *is* somewhat surprising to consider the number of learned men, men of *real* learning I mean, who flourished contemporaneously a hundred and fifty years ago, or even later, and to see how immeasurably it exceeded the number now to be found. Nor let me be told that if at the present day the truly learned are few in number, this is due to the fact that now learning is no longer confined to a few individuals, but is diffused among many; and that therefore the increased number of the educated compensates for the rarity of the learned. For knowledge is not like material wealth, which, whether divided or added together, always makes up the same total. Where the units of a people know little, the sum of the population knows little, since knowledge is a consolidated fund, and is incapable of dispersion. Superficial instruction cannot properly speaking be said to be distributed among the entire population, though it may be shared by a certain number of unlearned men. The rest of the existing stock of knowledge appertains only to the learned, and for the most part, only to the very learned. And, excepting fortuitous cases, it is only the very learned, and those who

possess an immense capital of knowledge, who are capable of making any substantial addition to human enlightenment, and of conducting it onwards in the path of progress. Now, except perhaps in Germany, from its nest in which country learning has not yet migrated, is it not apparent that the rise of men of profound learning becomes daily more and more rare, and I may say, impossible?

I make these observations, of course, only for the sake of discussion, and by way of philosophising a little, and indulging in a little mild sophistry; not that I for a moment question the soundness of your views on the main issue. Nay, even if I saw that the world was full of ignorant impostors and presumptuous fools, I should nevertheless of course believe, as I now admit to you, that knowledge and enlightenment are continually on the increase.

FRIEND.

Therefore you believe that the present age is superior to all those that went before it?

TRISTANO.

Assuredly—all the ages, including the most barbarous ones, have held this opinion of themselves; and so thinks the present century, and I with it. But if you ask me wherein consists its superiority to the former ages, whether as regards physical or moral conditions, I should have to fall back on the observations which I have just made.

FRIEND.

In a word, as touching the nature and the destinies of men and things, for at present I am not referring to literature or politics, do you hold the same views as those which are enunciated by the press at the present day?

TRISTANO.

Precisely. I believe and embrace the profound philosophy of our latter-day journals, which, having practically superseded all other forms of literature, and all other modes of study, especially of an arduous or uninviting character, are now the instructors and the light of the present age. Is it not so?

FRIEND.

It is most true. If your observations are sincere, and not ironical, I perceive you are now one of ourselves.

TRISTANO.

Oh! yes, certainly one of yourselves.

FRIEND.

Well, then, what do you propose to do with that book of yours? Surely you would not wish it to go down to posterity, breathing, as it does, sentiments so opposed to the opinions you now entertain.

TRISTANO.

Posterity? I cannot help laughing, since you are evidently joking, and if I thought it possible that you were serious, I should laugh still more. Not only as touching myself, but as touching all other individuals of the nineteenth century, and their individual concerns, I would have you to be well assured that there need be no fear concerning posterity, since the coming generations will know and care about us individually just about as much as did the generations which preceded us. As modern thinkers elegantly express it, individuals have disappeared before the masses, by which it is meant that, so far as individuals are concerned, they need no longer disquiet

themselves in any way about the future, since whatever their merits may be; they can no longer hope, even in their dreams, to attain even the miserable reward of a little reputation. Leave all to the masses; though seeing that they themselves are composed of individuals, I should be glad if some of the sages who now illuminate the age would tell me how the masses are to dispense with individuals.

But to return to the question of my book and of posterity. As to books in general; these are now generally written in less time than it takes to read them, and you must perceive that their value is proportionate to the labour involved in their production; and this too will be the measure of their chances of living. For my part, I believe that the next century will probably make a grand bonfire of the prodigious bibliography of this one. Or possibly the men of the twentieth century will say, 'We have whole libraries of books, some of which have cost twenty or thirty years of labour for their production; some more, some less, but all of them representing immense industry and learning. Let us first read *them*, since the chances are that we shall get some good out of them; and when we have read them all, then it will be time enough to turn to what may be called your improvised and ephemeral books.'

My friend, this age is an age of boys, and the few men who are left would do well to go and hide themselves for very shame, as the good walker did in the kingdom of the cripples. These poor boys, too, must needs take upon themselves to do all the things which in other times were done by men; so they do them, as the way of boys is, hastily and crudely, without any preparatory labour or trouble. Nay, they seem to think that the exalted standard which civilisation has attained, and the genius of the present

and the coming age, are, and will be, quite sufficient to absolve them and their successors for ever from the necessity of all sustained exertion in order to qualify them for any conceivable achievements.

Some days ago, a friend of mine, a practical man of business, assured me that nowadays even mediocrity is seldom to be met with; that nearly all persons are incapable, and unequal to the offices or duties to which they have been called, whether by necessity or chance or choice. And this appears to me to stamp the difference between this and former ages. In former times, as now, great excellence was ever rare; in former times, however, mediocrity held the field, whereas now incapacity predominates. From this arises grave confusion and disturbance; all desiring to be all-sufficient, no attention is paid to the few men of capacity who are yet to be found among us, and who, consequently, by reason of the multitude of competitors, are unable to open a path for the exercise of their gifts; and thus, while the worthless believe themselves to be distinguished, obscurity and insignificance become the common lot alike of the incapable and of the meritorious.

But statistics for ever! Long life to economic science, moral and political, to pocket cyclopedias, and manuals of all sorts, and all the other precious creations of the age! And, above all, long life to the nineteenth century; somewhat poor perhaps in things; but rich, oh, most rich and abundant in words; a phenomenon which, as you know, has always been a peculiarly favourite symptom of any given period. And let us be cheered by the thought that for another sixty-three years, at least,¹ this wonderful century shall be the only one to utter its wisdom and enunciate its sage opinions.

¹ This was written in the year 1834.

FRIEND.

You seem to be talking somewhat ironically. But you ought to remember that, if nothing else, the present century is one of transition.

TRISTANO.

And what do you propose to infer from that? All the ages have been, and will be, more or less periods of transition; since human society never stands still, nor will there ever be an age in which it will be stationary. So this sounding phrase furnishes no sort of apology for this century, or if it does, such apology is common to it with all other ages. If society pursues its present path, it will remain to be seen whither it will lead us, and whether the transition you speak of is a transition from good to better, or from bad to worse. Perhaps you will tell me that this transition is not so much a mere transition as a total transformation; that is to say, a sudden passage from one state of civilisation to another of a totally different character. In that case, I will take leave to laugh at such a notion; and I would reply that all transitions should be gradual; since if they are sudden and spasmodic, it very soon becomes necessary to retire again, and retrace our steps, so as to regulate the movement gradually. It has ever happened so; and the reason is that nature does not proceed by leaps and bounds; and when we put force upon her, no enduring results are attained—or rather, such precipitate transitions are apparent only, not real.

FRIEND.

I would advise you not to express such opinions to too many people; for, if you do, I think you will make troops of enemies.

TRISTANO.

I care not. Now neither enemies nor friends are likely to do me much harm.

FRIEND.

Or more probably you will be despised as one little conversant with modern philosophy, and little concerned as to the advancement of civilisation and the spread of enlightenment.

TRISTANO.

I am truly sorry to hear it. But what can I do? If people despise me, I'll try to take comfort.

FRIEND.

But, in fine, have you really changed your opinions, or have you not? and what do you propose to do about that book?

TRISTANO.

Perhaps the best thing I could do would be to burn it. But as I am not minded to do that, I think I shall preserve it, as a volume of romantic dreams, and melancholy musings; or possibly as an expression of the unhappiness of the author; since, between ourselves, my good friend, I am willing enough to believe that you and all other men may be happy; but as for myself, with your permission, and that of the century, I beg leave to say that I am most unhappy; and I must stick to this belief; and all the newspapers of the two worlds will not persuade me to the contrary.

FRIEND.

I know not the cause of this unhappiness you speak of; but the happiness or unhappiness of any particular person

is a thing of which no man can possibly be a judge but that person himself; and his judgment in the matter cannot possibly fail.

TRISTANO.

Most true. And furthermore I tell you frankly that I do not choose to resign myself to my unhappiness, or bow my head to destiny, or try to make a compromise with it, as so many others do. No, I dare to desire Death, and to desire it beyond all things, and with an ardour and sincerity with which I firmly believe very few desire it.

I would not say this to you, were I not very sure that when my hour comes my attitude then will not belie my present words; for although I do not yet perceive the distinct approach of that hour, yet I feel within me a presentiment which assures me it is not far off. I feel so ripe for death, so dead am I already in all my feelings; and so absolutely do I regard the fiction of life as now finished for me, that it seems to me absurd and incredible to suppose that I can yet live the forty or fifty years with which in the ordinary course of nature I am still threatened. I shudder at the bare thought of such a thing. But, like those horrible fancies which sometimes exceed the power of the imagination to realise, so this thought appears to me a dream, a nightmare, an illusion impossible to be true. Nay, when any one talks to me of a distant future as a thing which could possibly concern me, I cannot refrain from smiling to myself, so assured do I feel that the space of life now remaining to me will be brief indeed. This thought, I may truly say, is the one thing which sustains me. Books, studies, which I often wonder to have once so loved, swelling aims, and hopes of fame and immortality, all these are to me bubbles past even laughing at. I

deride not the hopes and aspirations of my contemporaries ; I heartily wish for them every conceivable success ; I applaud, and admire, and honour, profoundly and sincerely, the excellence and energy of their intentions and aims. Neither do I envy posterity, or those of my coevals, who have yet long to live. In former times I used to envy even fools and wiseacres, and all who were fed by lofty ideas of themselves and their condition ; and then I would often gladly have changed places with them. But now I no longer envy fool or sage, great or small, prince or peasant. I envy the dead alone, and with them alone would I exchange conditions. My every pleasing imagination, my every thought of the future, as I muse in solitude to beguile the time, dwells on death, and death alone. And in my yearning for death I am no longer disturbed, as I used to be, by the memory of my early dreams, or the thought of the vanity of life. When I am permitted to die, I shall die as tranquilly and as contentedly as if I had never hoped or desired aught else from life. This is the one boon that can reconcile me to destiny.

If I were offered, on the one hand, the fortune and the fame of Cæsar or of Alexander, pure from every stain ; and, on the other, to die this day ; and if I had to choose which I preferred, I should say, without hesitation, let me die this day.

THOUGHTS.

Thoughts.

IF we consider the lives of men who have signalised themselves greatly in their time, not by writing only, but by action, we shall find but very few of them, at least of the first rank, who did not lose their fathers very early in life. In the case of families which live on the income of realised property, the son, during the life-time of his father, is generally destitute of independent means of his own. This circumstance effectually prevents him from undertaking any enterprise of moment; while at the same time, having ample expectations, he is under no necessity of providing for his support by any active pursuit which might stimulate him to honourable exertion. And few persons so situated have been so stimulated; since the majority of those who have accomplished great things have generally been from an early period in their careers abundantly, or at least sufficiently, equipped with the gifts of fortune.

But, in addition to this, among all civilised nations the paternal authority carries with it a sort of subjection of the son; and this authority, being domestic, is even more stringent in its operation, and more sensibly felt by its objects, than that of the State; and however it may be tempered by law or custom, or by the special idiosyncrasy of individuals, it never fails to produce a benumbing influ-

ence on those who are affected by it. A sense of this is invariably experienced by the man whose father still lives ; and it is intensified and confirmed by his perception of the estimation in which he is held by society. He labours under a consciousness of subjection and dependence ; under a feeling that he is not free master of himself ; nay, that he is, so to say, not an entire person, but only a part, a limb, a member of another, and that his very name belongs to that other rather than to himself. And this sentiment is most keenly experienced by those who are by nature best equipped for action, since their imagination is more vivid than that of others ; they are more susceptible than others of all emotion, and more quick to realise the true nature of their position.

Now the sentiment I speak of is almost incompatible, not only with vigorous action, but with the very formation of designs on any worthy scale. For if a man passes his youth under such circumstances, and does not feel himself master of his own movements till he has reached the age of forty or fifty years, it is superfluous to say that he then feels little incitement to enterprise ; and even if he felt such incitement, he would no longer have the energy and vigour necessary to the performance of anything worth naming, or even enough of life left for its accomplishment.

In this reflection we find an illustration of the truth that in this world every good thing is accompanied by some proportionate drawback, since the inestimable advantage of having in youth a loving and sagacious guide, such as a father alone can be, is balanced by a sort of obliteration or mutilation of the character, not only in youth, but too often throughout the rest of life.¹

¹ See Note 47.

What follows here is not a *thought*, but an incident, which I bring in at this point in the hope that it may interest the reader. My friend, nay, the companion of my life, Antonio Ranieri, a youth who, if he be spared, and if men do not contrive to frustrate his natural gifts, will one day be well known to fame; I say Antonio Ranieri and I were living together at Florence in the year 1834. One summer evening there and then Ranieri happened to be passing along *Via Buia*, and when he came to the corner close to the Square of the Cathedral, he found quite a crowd of people assembled under a ground-floor window in what is now the Riccardi palace. The people were in a state of great excitement and alarm, and were calling out, 'A ghost! a ghost!' My friend then peered through the window into the room, which was only dimly illuminated by the flickering light of one of the street lamps, and, sure enough, he saw what seemed to him to be the shadowy form of a woman, who tossed her arms from side to side, but was otherwise motionless. However, as he had other things to think about, he passed on, and thought no more of the matter either that evening or on the morrow.

But a few nights after, about the same hour, he chanced to pass by the same spot, and there he found a greater crowd assembled than on the previous evening, and heard the same terror-stricken cries of 'A ghost! a ghost!' He then again looked in at the window, and beheld the same shadowy form still silently waving its arms. The window was not much higher above the street than the height of a man, and one of the crowd, who seemed to be a constable, called out that if any of those present would give him a back, he would climb up and see what it was. Hereupon Ranieri volunteered to mount on the fellow's shoulders himself, and examine the interior. To this the man agreed, and up

climbed my friend. Well, when he was up, what do you think he saw? Close to the iron grating of the window a woman's black pinafore stretched out on the back rail of a chair, which, fluttering in the wind, gave that appearance of the waving of arms, while propped up on the chair was the distaff of a spinning-wheel, which made the spectre's head! Ranieri took it up, and showed it to the crowd, who then with much laughter dispersed

Well, what of all this? I have told the story not so much for its merits as such, but because I think it may concern the critical historian, and may interest the speculative philosopher, to know that in the nineteenth century, and in Florence, the most polished city of Italy, whose population is famed for its intelligence, people see spectres and believe in ghosts, which turn out to be nothing more than pinafores and spindles. And foreigners too need not smile at us, as they are so fond of doing, since it is perfectly certain there is not one of the three great nations which, as the newspapers say, march at the head of civilisation, but believes in ghosts just as much as the Italians.

Death is not an evil, for it liberates man from all evils, and in taking away his earthly comforts it extinguishes his desire for them. Old age is an unmitigated evil, for in taking away all his pleasures it leaves to man the desire for them, and brings with it all manner of sufferings. For all this, men fear death, and desire old age.

One of the gravest errors which men daily fall into is that of supposing that their secrets are unknown to others. Not

only those secrets which they may have revealed in confidence to their friends, but also the secrecy of matters which, against their will and in spite of themselves, are liable to leak out, and which it greatly concerns them to conceal. Now I affirm that if you know that any affair of yours is known to any other man, you greatly delude yourself if you imagine for a moment that it is not known to the public, however injurious or discreditable it may be to you that it should be so known. For their own interests indeed, men do, by a great effort, abstain from divulging their own secrets, but other men's secrets are seldom sacred to them. And if you doubt this, only examine yourself, and consider candidly how rarely you have been restrained from divulging the secret of another by any consideration of the annoyance, of injury, or discredit which might thence result to that other. For even if you may have refrained from divulging it to many, yet you have imparted it to this friend, or that, or the other, which comes to the same thing. In our social life there is no craving so imperious as the craving to chatter, since chatter is one of the principal means of passing the time, and to do this latter is one of the first necessities of life. But no material for chatter and gossip is so exquisite or so highly calculated to tickle curiosity and dispel *ennui* as the disclosure of things which are not only news, but secrets.

Therefore, adhere firmly to the following rule:—If there be any things which you do not wish men to impute to you, certainly do not divulge them—-but better still, *do not do them*; for as to what you do, or what you may have done, be well assured that it is known, whether you know it or not.

Should any man, in opposition to the opinion of others, predict the issue of any given affair, and should the issue conform to his prediction, let him not for a moment suppose that his opponents will give him credit for his forecast, or admit that he exhibited more sagacity than they did. Either they will deny the fact of the prediction, or the fact of the issue; or they will allege that circumstances have modified the entire aspect of the case; or in one way or another they will discover pretexts for persuading themselves and their friends that their opinion was right, and yours wrong.

As touching the persons to whom we commit the education of our children, we very well know that in many cases, and in many respects, they themselves are uneducated. Yet we never doubt their ability to give that which they have not received.

There have been centuries which, in the matter of the arts, and in general enlightenment, having produced nothing, have yet had the presumption to revolutionise everything.

If a man should have attained to any important result by dint of much toil and trouble, or even after long expectation alone, and then sees his neighbour attain to the same result easily and quickly, he is indignant; for although he himself is not thereby prejudiced in the enjoyment of that which he has attained, yet his imagination represents it as grievously depreciated in value when it is shared by one who has incurred little or no trouble for its attainment.

Just so the labourer in the parable complained bitterly

because those labourers who had toiled less than he had, received as much wages as he did ; and regarded this as a positive injury done to himself. Similarly, the friars of certain orders are wont to treat all novices with extreme rigour, lest they should without suffering reach the position which it cost themselves much suffering to attain. •

It is a fair and fond illusion which hovers round the subject of anniversaries. It is obvious that such days have in reality no more connection with the events which are then recalled than any other days in the calendar ; and yet to our minds they seem to bear a peculiar relation to those events. On such occasions a sort of shadow of the past appears to arise and present itself to our imagination, tending to allay the sad thought of the obliteration of the days that are gone, and to temper our regrets for departed happiness with the pleasing illusion that even that which is past, and can never return, is not totally extinguished or lost.

When we find ourselves on the scene of any events memorable either from their own character or from their relation to ourselves, and when we reflect that on such spots such and such occurrences took place, we seem to feel ourselves in a manner nearer to those occurrences than we do elsewhere. And similarly, when on any particular day we reflect that any particular event happened on that day, a year ago, or any number of years ago, that event appears to us to be more vividly present to our minds, and less a thing of the past, than it does on other days. Nay, this habit is so ingrained in us that we have a positive difficulty in realising the fact that the anniversary

has as little to do with the event which is then commemorated as any other day in the year.

Hence it is seen that among all nations which have, or ever had, the use of calendars, it is, and has ever been, the custom to make annual celebration of important occurrences, whether secular or religious, public or private, and to pay due observance to the anniversaries of the births and deaths of relatives and friends. Moreover, having investigated this matter particularly, I have ascertained that they who lead a life of retirement, and who are most accustomed to introspection and meditation, are wont to be the most observant of anniversaries, and seem to feed on the recollections of the past, continually chewing the cud, so to speak, of memory, and exclaiming to themselves, 'It was on this day of such and such a year that such and such a thing happened to me.'

It is surely calculated to cause a pang to parents and to the educators of the rising generation, to reflect that whatever may be the natural gifts of their children or their charges, and whatever diligence and care may be employed in bringing them up, contact with the world will assuredly corrupt them, and, unless they die first, will too probably convert them into rogues. This consideration reminds one of the answer of Thales¹ to the question of Solon, as to the reason why he did not take a wife. Thales said that he was deterred from marriage by the contemplation of the varied anxieties which racked the minds of parents regarding the future of their children, and their dread of the misfortunes and perils which might await them. But, in my opinion, he would have found a more rational and

¹ See Note 48.

valid excuse had he alleged his reluctance to add to the number of rogues already existing.

The philosopher Chilo, who was reputed one of the seven sages of Greece, used to say that men of great bodily strength ought to be sweet in manners and disposition, in order to inspire in others reverence rather than fear. Similarly, they who manifestly excel their fellows by reason of great intellectual or other gifts, ought carefully to cultivate affability and sweetness of manner, if not even a habit of positive humility, towards those around them. They should bear in mind how grave is the fault for which they have to atone, and how implacable is the enemy whom they have to appease--the one, superiority, the other, envy. Such was the sentiment of the ancients when they found themselves on the summit of prosperity. They then thought it well to appease the gods themselves, seeking by self-abasement and sacrifice and voluntary penance, to expiate the scarcely expiable sin of being prosperous and happy.

According to Tacitus, the emperor Otho used to say that since the same end was allotted to the virtuous and to the vicious, it would be just as well if a man did something deserving of death. Some such sentiment apparently influences those persons who, by nature virtuous and well-disposed, become perverted and depraved by intercourse with the world, and are exacerbated by experience of the ingratitude and the injustice of men, and the fierce hostility which they evince towards their neighbours, and more especially towards the good. And in this matter such

persons are not actuated by inherent corruption, or influenced by evil example, as weak characters are wont to be. Neither are they moved by the promptings of self-interest, or by any desire for the worthless advantages of the world, nor even by the hope of escaping from the prevailing malevolence around them, but their attitude is assumed by deliberate choice, with the view of avenging themselves on men, and retaliating their iniquity, by employing against them their own weapons. And this perversion which I have referred to as occurring in the disposition of persons of this stamp, is all the more marked when it springs from a consciousness of virtue in themselves; and is all the more formidable when it is combined, as it frequently is, with a certain elevation and force of character, in which case it resembles a species of heroism.

Just as our prisons and galleys are full of people who, by their own showing, are perfectly innocent, so our public offices and dignities of all kinds are enjoyed only by persons who have been called to them, and forced to accept them, against their own wishes, and as it were in spite of themselves. In fact, it is almost impossible to find a man who will confess that he deserves any penalty which he may have incurred, or that he sought or desired any honour or emolument which he enjoys. If anything, the latter case is even rarer than the former.

In Florence once I saw a fellow employed, like any beast of burden, as the manner there is, in dragging a hand-cart laden with goods. As he went along with the greatest

arrogance, shouting to the public, and ordering the passers-by to give place to him, I was reminded of those numerous persons who go through the world puffed up with self-satisfaction, and insulting honest men, for no better reasons than those of the fellow in the streets of Florence; since they, too, are little better than beasts of burden, dragging their miserable hand-cart.

Just as Cervantes wrote a book which purged Spain of spurious chivalry, so I, if I but possessed his genius, would fain write one calculated to purge Italy, and indeed the whole civilised world, of a vice which, having regard to the humanity which in other respects characterises the age, is perhaps not less cruel and barbarous than any of the relics of mediæval ferocity which were lashed by the satire of Cervantes.

I refer to the vicious practice which some writers have of reading or reciting their compositions to their friends. Now this offence is indeed of hoary antiquity; but in former ages it was comparatively endurable, because it was comparatively rare. At the present day, however, when all men write, and when it is most difficult to meet with a man who is not an author, it has assumed the proportions of a social scourge, a public calamity, and a new terror to life. Indeed it is no exaggeration, but the simple truth, to say that by reason of this odious practice our acquaintances have become objects of suspicion, and friendship itself a danger; and that there is no time or place at which some innocent person may not be assailed, and subjected on the spot, or be dragged away in order to be subjected, to the torture of listening to interminable prose compositions, or to verses by the thousand. Nor is this

cruelty any longer practised under the colourable pretext of desiring an opinion on the merits of these compositions, as used to be the ostensible excuse for such inflictions; but simply and solely for the pleasure it gives to the author to hear the sound of his own productions; and in order that, on the conclusion of his recitation, he may enjoy the extorted applause of his hearers.

In good sooth I think that few things are more calculated than this to exhibit the puerility of human nature, and the extreme of blindness and infatuation to which self-love is capable of conducting a man; while at the same time it is a lurid illustration of the capacity of the human mind to cheat itself with illusions. For every man knows by his own experience what an ineffable nuisance it is to have to listen to the twaddle of other people, and yet, though he sees his friends turn pale with dismay when invited to listen to *his*; though he hears them plead every imaginable pretext for escape, and perceives that they even try to flee from him and hide themselves, nevertheless, with a brazen front, and with a fell persistence like that of a famished bear, he will hunt and pursue his prey over half the town, and when he catches him, he drags him to the destined scene of suffering. Then during the recitation though he perceives, first by his yawns, then by his uneasy shiftings and contortions, and a hundred other signs, how acute are the sufferings of the unhappy listener, yet he will not desist or have mercy on him, but all the more ruthlessly continues droning on for hours, if not for entire days or evenings, until, having talked himself hoarse, and his hearer having swooned, he is at length exhausted though not sated.

Yet during this process, and throughout this torture which he inflicts on his neighbour, it is evident that he experiences a sort of superhuman delight; for we see

people, in the pursuit of this pleasure, sacrifice all other enjoyments, neglect food and repose, and forget everything else in life. And his delight arises from his firm belief that he excites the admiration of his hearer, and gives him pleasure; for if this were not so, it would serve his purpose equally well to declaim to the desert as to recite to his fellow-creatures. Now, as to the pleasure conferred on the auditors—I say advisedly *auditors*, not *listeners*—I have just said that every one knows by experience what *that* is; and it is not concealed even from the reciter himself; and sure am I that many would prefer grievous bodily pain to such a pleasure as that. Finally, even the most beautiful and valuable compositions, when recited by their authors, are enough to bore one to death; which reminds me of the opinion of a learned friend of mine, who said that if it be true that the empress Octavia fainted away while Virgil was reading to her the sixth canto of his *Aeneid*, the probability is that her swoon was caused, not by the poet's pathetic allusion to the fate of her son Marcellus, as is commonly alleged, but by sheer weariness of the reading.

Such is human nature. For this practice, so barbarous and so ridiculous, and so repugnant to common sense, springs in fact from a disease inherent in the human species, since there is not, and never has been, any nation, however polite, any condition of human society, or any age, exempt from this pest. Italians, French, English, Germans; hoary-headed men; men wise in all other respects; men of worth and genius; the most experienced in social conduct; the most finished in manners, including those most prone to note the follies of others, and to brand them with ridicule—all alike become children, and very cruel children, when they have a chance of reciting their own compositions. And just as this vice flourishes in our time, so it did in that

of Horace, who declared it to be insupportable; and in that of Martial, who, being asked by an acquaintance why he did not recite his verses, replied, 'That I may escape from hearing yours.' And so it was even in the most brilliant period of ancient Greece; since it is related that once Diogenes the cynic, finding himself present at one of these recitations, in company with some other persons, all exhausted with *ennui*, and seeing at length the blank page appear at the end of the scroll which the reciter held in his hand, he exclaimed, 'Courage friends, I see land.'

Nowadays, however, matters have come to such a pass that the supply of listeners, even on compulsion, no longer keeps pace with the demands of reciters; and in these circumstances certain ingenious friends of mine have given their serious attention to the subject, and, being persuaded that the recitation by authors of their own compositions is one of the most imperious needs of human nature, they have pondered on a scheme calculated not only to satisfy it, but also to direct its gratification, like that of other general public needs, to the promotion of the benefit of individuals. For this purpose they are about to open a sort of Academy or Athenæum of Listening, where, at specified hours, they, or persons employed by them, will listen to any writer desirous of reciting his compositions. For this service there will be a fixed tariff of charges; thus, for listening to prose, one crown for the first hour, two crowns for the second, four for the third, eight crowns for the fourth hour, and so on, increasing by arithmetical progression. For listening to poetry, these charges will be doubled. If at any time the reciter should wish to read any particular passage a second time, as often happens, he will be charged one *lira* extra for each line so repeated.

If, in the course of any reading, any of the listeners should fall asleep, he will forfeit to the reader one-third of the fee falling due to be paid him. To provide for the possible case of convulsions, syncope, or other such accesses overtaking any listener or reciter, the institution will be furnished with appropriate essences and medicines, which will be dispensed without extra charge.

In this way, the ear, which has hitherto been an unproductive organ, will become a source of direct profit to its owner, and a new path will be opened up to industry, to the increase of the public wealth.

In conversation we seldom experience a lively or lasting pleasure save when we are permitted to speak about ourselves, or the things in which we are engaged, or which concern us in one way or another. All other topics soon pall upon us; and this one, so pleasing to us, is mortally tedious to others. But no man can become popular except at the price of some sacrifice, or acquire the character of a pleasant companion without practising some self-suppression; for in conversation, he only is liked who ministers to the self-satisfaction of others, who listens much and speaks little, who lets others talk their fill of themselves and their affairs, and even starts them on such well-loved topics, and dwells on them himself. At the end of the conversation, the company will have a very favourable impression of that man, and he will be very sick of the company. And, conversely, if we retire from any given company in a state of high satisfaction with ourselves, and regard that company as having been a very delightful one, we may take it as pretty certain that that company will have formed a very unfavourable opinion of *us*.

The conclusion of the matter is that in general conversation, or private colloquy, where the object of the interlocutors is merely mutual entertainment, it inevitably happens that the satisfaction of one party is the dissatisfaction of the other ; and you must make up your mind either to be bored on the one hand, or, on the other, to regret your brilliancy ; and you will be a fortunate man if you experience these results in anything like equal proportions

At the present time, unless I am very much mistaken, if you see a man generally praised, you may be pretty sure that his praises began in his own mouth. Such is the prevailing egoism, and such the envy and hatred which men generally bear towards each other, that if a man wishes to acquire a reputation, it is not sufficient to do things deserving of praise, but you must cry up all that you do, or, which comes to the same thing, you must find some one else who shall continually extol and magnify your performances, and din your name into the ears of the public, and constrain others, by the force of their example, and by their sheer brazen pertinacity, to repeat and re-echo at least a part of your praises. Do not imagine that any mere merit you may possess, or any mere superiority your works may exhibit, will ever of themselves attract attention. Men will only look on in silence, or, if they do anything, they will, if it be possible, try to conceal your merits from others. He who wishes to rise, whatever his true worth may be, must say good-bye to modesty. In this respect the world is like women—modesty and reserve have little success with the one or with the other.

- No man is ever so completely disillusioned by the world, or has so thoroughly gauged it, or is so irreconcilably disgusted with it, but that, if the world suddenly smiles on *him*, he will insensibly undergo a partial reconciliation to *it*. So no man is in our opinion such a scoundrel but that, if he politely takes off his hat to us, he will appear not such a scoundrel after all. This reflection serves to illustrate the weakness of human nature; not to justify either the world or the scoundrel.

If a man be suddenly overtaken by any misfortune, and especially if it be due to no fault of his own, and if, in the first moments of his distress, his thoughts revert to his friends and acquaintances, or even to the outside world, then, if he have little experience of life, or sometimes even if he have considerable experience of it, he naturally expects to meet with sympathy and consolation at the least, to say nothing of substantial succour, and he fondly imagines that men will evince all the more consideration for him in consequence of his reverses. Certainly nothing is so far from his imagination as the thought that, in consequence of these very reverses, he will be, so to say, degraded from his position in society, be looked upon as a sort of malefactor, and fall into disgrace with his friends; while his acquaintances flee on every hand, and at a safe distance rejoice over his calamity and hold him in derision. And, conversely, should any piece of good fortune occur to such a man, one of his first thoughts will naturally be that his friends will share his joy with him, and that possibly their satisfaction on the occasion will even exceed his own. Assuredly it would never occur to him to imagine that, on hearing of his prosperity, the faces of his friends would be distorted and

clouded ; that some of them would be disgusted ; some do their best at first to disbelieve the news, and then to depreciate and make light of it to themselves and to others ; that the cordiality of some towards him would cool down, and of others be changed into hatred ; while not a few would do all in their power to rob him of his newly-acquired happiness.

So widely do the suggestions of our imagination, and even of our reason, differ from the actualities of human life !

If a man would have all life to be made up of philosophy and wisdom, be sure he is little of a philosopher and little of a sage.

The human race in all its subdivisions consists of two classes—those who abuse power, and those who suffer in consequence ; since no law or authority can effectually prevent this. And since, in spite of any conceivable progress of civilisation or philosophy, all who live or have yet to live, must belong to one or the other of these two classes, it behoves all who can, to make their choice between them. But truly, not all *can* do so, or at all times.

No profession is so unprofitable as that of literature. Yet in this world such is the force of imposture that, by the help of it, even letters may become profitable. Imposture is the soul, the animating principle, of social life ; an art without the aid of which no art, no gift, regarded in the light of its influence on the human mind, is perfect

or complete. If you examine the conditions of two persons, one of whom is a man of true merit in any matter, and the other of only apparent merit, you will find that the latter is often more successful than the former; nay, you will frequently find that while the latter is successful, the former is the reverse. Imposture, in one form or another, will sometimes prevail and make its way without the aid of truth; but truth unaided by imposture, in one form or another, can seldom effect much. Nor do I think that this arises from any deliberate perversity inherent in mankind, but from the fact that the naked truth is generally so pale and unattractive that, in order to impress men, it is necessary to colour and supplement it with illusion and prestige, and thus to hold out to their imagination more things and better things than are actually attainable. Nature herself has practised imposture towards man; and is unable to make his existence agreeable, or even endurable, except by the operation of illusion and imagination.

Just as men habitually decry the present and extol the past, so the majority of travellers, while they are travelling, extol their native country, and warmly profess to prefer it to the foreign lands they visit. But, when they return home, they will with equal warmth express a preference for those foreign lands.

In all countries those faults and failings which are common to mankind, and universal in all human societies, are supposed to be peculiar to these particular countries. I have never been in a place where I have not heard some such sentiments as the following:—"Here the women are

giddy and inconstant; they are badly educated, and read little"—or, "Here the public is meddlesome, and full of idle curiosity about the affairs of their neighbours, given to tittle-tattle and backbiting"—or, "Here money and favouritism and baseness can effect anything"—"Here envy prevails everywhere, and friendship is hollow," and so on;—just as if elsewhere matters were any different. The fact is, men are base "by necessity, yet they are resolved to believe that they are base only by accident.

Unskilful deceivers, and especially female ones, almost always imagine that their deceptions are effectual, and that the objects of them have been deceived. But impostors of greater astuteness generally entertain doubts on this point, knowing better the difficulties of their art, and its liability to recoil on themselves, and being fully aware that other people are just as much bent on deceiving as they are; from which two latter circumstances it often results that the deceiver is himself deceived. Besides, the more intelligent impostor does not think other people such fools as the less reflecting ones do.

Some young men sometimes fancy that they will make themselves interesting in the eyes of others by affecting a melancholy mood. Now it is possible that melancholy, when affected, may be pleasing enough for a time, especially to women. But when it is real, it is shunned by all mankind; and in the long run nothing is so pleasing and so successful in the commerce of society as cheerfulness; since when all is told, and with all due deference to

some young men, the world, and wisely, would rather laugh than weep.

In certain places which hover between civilisation and barbarism, such, for example, as Naples,¹ one observes in a striking manner a thing which, it is true, is more or less observable everywhere—namely, that if a man is believed to be poor, he is hardly looked upon as a man at all; and if a man is reputed to be rich, his life is not safe. This being so, when you find yourself in such a place, you would do well to adopt the custom generally practised in places of that description, and observe profound secrecy as to your financial position; and then the public will not know whether they ought to despise you or cut your throat. In this way you will occupy a position which is after all occupied by most men everywhere—you will be half despised and half respected; sometimes exposed to injury, and sometimes left in peace.

Many persons desire to act basely to us, and at the same time they expect us, under penalty of their hatred, neither to counteract their villainy, nor to regard them as villains.

No human quality is more intolerable and less tolerated than intolerance.

When two fencers of equal skill are matched against each other, the art of fencing is in their case reduced to a nullity, since neither of them has any more advantage over the

¹ This was written nearly sixty years ago.

other than if they were both equally unskilled. In the same way it often happens that men resort to falsehood and iniquity gratuitously and to no purpose ; for when they find themselves encountered by an equal degree of iniquity and falsehood in others, the position of the parties becomes neither better nor worse than it would have been if both had been actuated by probity and truth. Thus it is pretty certain that wickedness and duplicity seldom prove effectual save when they are conjoined to superior force, or else where they encounter an inferior degree of these qualities in others, or are matched against positive goodness. Of these cases, the last mentioned is necessarily rare ; and the second is not common, since scoundrels are generally about equal in depravity. It is sad to reflect how often, by simply doing good to one another, men might attain with facility objects which they attain with infinite difficulty, and sometimes entirely fail to attain, by wronging one another.

Baldassar Castiglione, in his *Courtier*, analyses ingeniously enough the reason why the old usually extol the time when they were young and depreciate the present. The absurd delusion from which this habit springs is, he says, partly due to the fact that as our years flee away, and rob us of so many physical properties, among other things they eliminate from the blood a great part of its vital essence, thus deteriorating the entire system, and debilitating those organs by whose operation the conclusions of the senses are unconsciously coloured. Just as in autumn the leaves fall from the trees, so in old age the sweet flowers of contentment fall from our hearts, and the serene and bright

thoughts of youth and manhood are succeeded by a clouded melancholy, accompanied by a thousand cares. Then, too, not only is the body weakened, but the mind also becomes infirm, and of the joys of the past it retains nought but a tenacious recollection, coupled with a lively image of the happy time when these joys were present. And when the aged revisit that time in fancy it seems to them as if then the earth and the sky, and all things else, exulted, and smiled radiantly upon them; and their imagination, like some enchanting fairy garden, teems with the sweet spring flowers of happy memory.

This being so, it appeared to Castiglione that in the chilly evening of life, when the sun of our existence is verging to its decline, and life is stripped of its delights, it would perhaps be well for us if then we were bereft of the very power of memory, and could acquire in its stead what Themistocles called the faculty of forgetfulness, since our senses are so fallacious that they generally overpower the conclusions of our reason. He compares the old to those persons who, as they sail away from the port, keep their gaze fixed on the shore, and seem to persuade themselves that the bark is at rest, and that the land recedes; whereas in fact the port, and similarly the season of human happiness, remain ever in the same place, while we, sailing away in the ship of mortality pass on, one after another, on the stormy ocean which absorbs all things; nor is it permitted to us ever again to return to the land, since, after being long the sport of adverse gales, our ship is finally dashed to pieces on the rocks.

The old man, though his mind dwells vainly and unreasonably on the thought of pleasure, can never taste it; and just as the most exquisite wines seem bitter to the perverted palate of the fever-stricken sufferer, so with the old, though

they retain their appetite for happiness, yet all pleasures seem to them stale and insipid, and far different from those which they remember to have once enjoyed; though in fact these pleasures are in themselves unchanged. Then, resenting this condition, they complain, and blame the present time as having deteriorated, not discerning that the deterioration has occurred, not in the time, but in themselves. Similarly, when they recall the memory of their past enjoyments, they recall also the time when they were enjoyed, and extol it as superior to the present; since it seems to them to be impregnated with the flavour of what they enjoyed when it was present; for the human mind ever abhors the circumstances which have accompanied unhappiness, and loves those which are associated with joy.

Such was the speculation of Castiglione, and, after the manner of our best Italian writers, he has embodied an indubitable truth in language no less beautiful than rich. In corroboration of his views, it may be added that aged persons habitually declare the present to be inferior to the past, not only in respect to matters which depend on the agency of man, but also in respect to such as have no such dependency, alleging that they, too, have changed for the worse, not merely, which would be true, in regard to the way in which they affect themselves, but generally and absolutely in their own conditions.

I suppose every one must have often heard old persons of his acquaintance, as I certainly have, complain that nowadays the seasons have become colder than they used to be, and the winters longer; and that in their time it was customary to lay aside warm clothing and adopt summer dress about Easter; a thing which, according to them, could now hardly be done until the month of May, or even, in some years, June. And not many years ago certain

physicists gravely investigated the causes of this supposed diminution in the temperature of the seasons; some alleging the disafforestation of the mountains, and others advancing other considerations, in order to account for a fact which has no existence. Nay, if anything, the fact is precisely the reverse; since from sundry passages in the ancient writers it may actually be inferred that, in the time of the Romans, Italy was in all probability somewhat colder than it now is. And indeed this is readily to be believed, since it is corroborated by our own experience, and it is demonstrable that, by the operation of obvious natural laws, as civilisation advances in any given country, the atmosphere there has a tendency to become gradually a trifle milder. This result has been proved notably in America, where, almost within our own memory, a mature civilisation has suddenly succeeded to a condition of barbarism, or has in certain places operated on an absolute state of primeval nature. But the old, finding the cold more intolerable at their age than it was in their youth, imagine that the change which they experience has taken place in the external phenomena of nature, and fancy that the caloric which is diminishing in themselves, has diminished in the atmosphere. And so rooted in our nature is this belief, that, not to go further back, we find that the contemporaries of Magalotti, a hundred and fifty years ago, used to make the same assertions on the subject that old persons now do. In his private letters, that observer has recorded his conviction that the old order of the seasons had undergone, and was still undergoing, a palpable change. "Here in Italy," he writes, "it is a general complaint that the intermediate weather-periods no longer occur; and in this confusion of the seasons it is unquestionable that the cold is ever on the increase. I have heard my father say that at Rome, in his

youth, everybody took to summer clothes on Easter morning; whereas now, on that date, unless a man had pawned his shirt, he would take very good care not to remove a stitch of the clothing which he wore in the heart of winter."

Thus wrote Magalotti in 1683. Well, if from that time till now our climate had gone on continually getting gradually colder at the same rate as was then represented, by this time it would be colder than Greenland.

It is hardly necessary to observe that these remarks have no reference to the continual cooling down process which is said to be always proceeding in the body of our planet, from internal causes—a process which, by reason of its geologic slowness, could produce no effect perceptible by us except in the lapse of vast periods of time.

It is seldom reasonable to be offended by things said of us in our absence, and not intended to come to our ears. For if any man will candidly investigate his own conduct, he will probably find that he holds no friend so dear, or any other person in such veneration, but that, in the absence of that friend or person, he will sometimes let fall expressions regarding him little calculated to give him pleasure. Our self-love is so inordinately sensitive and exacting that whatever is said of us behind our backs, if it be reported to us literally, is almost certain to dissatisfy us, or wound our feelings. Yet how little is our own conduct regulated in accordance with the precept of doing to others as we would wish them to do to us; and what licence do we permit to ourselves in our judgment of others!

When a man has reached, or but little passed, the age of five-and-twenty years, it is a new and strange sensation to him to find himself regarded by many of his associates as senior to them, and to recognise the fact that a great many people are younger than himself, so long accustomed to feel that he was in the very first bloom of youth. Up to that time, whatever his other defects may have been, he had at least felt that as regards the advantage of youthfulness he was surpassed by none, since those who were younger than himself he had regarded as boys, and items of no consideration in society. But now he begins to feel that the precious boon of youth, which hitherto he had regarded as his own, and of his very essence, and the loss of which had never entered his imagination, is a fleeting boon, given only for a short season; and now, for the first time, he begins to cherish it, not only for its own charm, but also as its loss may affect him in the estimation of others. Yes, when the age of twenty-five is past, too soon the flower of youth begins to droop; and then no person of sensibility can truly feel that he has not tasted of unhappiness; for, even if prosperous in all things else, he who has passed that age becomes conscious of an impending misfortune bitter above all others, and perhaps most bitter to those who are prosperous in all things else—the decay and the death of his cherished youth.

Time is the sovereign remedy for the effects of calumny, as for the other ills of life. Should the world condemn any particular line of conduct on the part of any man, if that man wants a quiet life, his best course is to stick to that line of conduct. After a short time the subject will become stale, and the railers will drop it, were it only in order to

look out for some fresher subject for their railing. And the more firmly and consistently we pursue our way, disdaining the idle censures of society, the sooner will men come to accept as reasonable that which at first they condemned as the reverse. For the world seldom imagines that the man who steadily persists in any given course may be wrong; and ends by condemning itself, and acquitting him. Hence arises the well-known fact that weak men are governed by the will of the world, but strong ones by their own.

It does not reflect much honour—shall I say on mankind or on virtue?—to find that in all polite languages, ancient and modern, the same terms are used in order to connote *goodness* and *folly*; an *honest man* and a *fool*. Many words of this class—as, in Italian, *dabbenaggine*, simplicity; or, in Greek, *εὐθθεια*, honesty—have entirely lost their primary and proper signification, in which, perhaps, they would have little utility or application, and now retain no other sense but the secondary, that is, the bad one; if indeed they ever had any other. Such is the estimation in which, in all times, the multitude have held goodness; and their judgments and inner sentiments are too often revealed, even in spite of themselves, in the forms of their habitual speech. The fixed opinion of the multitude, although disguised in a perversion of terms, is that no man whose choice is free would choose to be good. Let fools be good, for they can't be anything else.

Man is condemned to one or the other of two alternatives—either he must waste his youth to no purpose, and youth is the sole season for providing for the later years of life;

or he must spend it in providing enjoyments for that part of his life when he will no longer be capable of enjoying them.

Let no man think he knows the world, if he have not learned to regard as a mere empty form of words the generality of the offers or promises which may be made to him of sympathy or aid, no matter from whom they proceed; and the more spontaneous they seem, and the more pressing and reiterated they may be, the less, in many cases, are they to be trusted. Be chary of accepting even the most urgent invitations to avail yourself of the good offices of others, even when supported by the warmest professions of benevolence. For if you yield to the persuasion of your professing sympathiser, or succumb through sheer weariness to his seeming importunity, and prevail on yourself to reveal to him your need, you will too often see him suddenly turn pale, change the conversation, make random replies, and leave you in the lurch; and, for a long time after, you will be a lucky man if you see, or hear from, him.

The fact is, that most men do not desire to confer benefits on others; for, in the first place, the bestowal of benefits involves trouble; and besides that, the misfortunes of our friends never fail to give us a certain satisfaction. What men *do* love is the reputation of benevolence, and the gratitude of others; and that sense of superiority in fortune which springs from the bestowal of assistance. Nevertheless, often, even when unwilling to give, men are willing to offer; and the more you refuse, the more they will press, for the twofold reason that thereby they wound your pride, while your refusal to be benefited relieves them of the fear that they may be taken at their word. In this way they

will, with wonderful courage, pretend to push the matter with infinite apparent earnestness, disregarding the danger of detection, and hoping to win your gratitude on easy terms. But the instant they see symptoms of yielding on your part, such men take to their heels.

Bion, the humorous philosopher of Borysthenes, used to say that it was impossible to please the multitude except by becoming a savoury pasty, or a generous wine. And yet, while society exists, this impossibility will continue to be pursued, even by those who profess not to pursue it, and sometimes even by those who honestly believe they do not pursue it. In the same way, so long as the human race shall endure, the wisest of men will persevere in the pursuit of happiness, and in the vain hope of attaining it.

A woman is sometimes laughed at if she sincerely regrets the loss of her husband; yet she will be severely censured if, for any reason, however cogent, she should appear in society, or lay aside her mourning weeds, one day before the customary time. It is a trite axiom that the world is satisfied with appearances. But this axiom, though trite, is not complete. In order to make it complete, we ought to add to it that the world is never satisfied with the reality, often is indifferent about it, and sometimes hates it. The ancient world studied more to *be* good than to appear so. Nowadays society says, appear to be good, but never be so.

Sincerity may sometimes prove useful when it is adopted in order to deceive, or when, from its rarity, it is not believed.

Men blush, not for the injuries which they inflict, but for those which they receive. Therefore, the only way to make wrong-doers blush, is to return them tit for tat.

It was truly said by La Bruyère that it is easier for a bad book to acquire reputation by virtue of the reputation already acquired by its author, than for an author to acquire a reputation by virtue of a good book. To this it may be added that perhaps the surest way for a man to acquire a reputation is to assert confidently and persistently, and by all possible ways and means, that he has already acquired it.

The estimation which any artist has of his art, or any scientist of his science, is generally in inverse ratio to the estimation which he has of his own skill or proficiency in the same.

When an artist, or scientist, or student of any given subject compares himself, not with other students thereof, but with his subject itself, it is always found that the higher his opinion of it is, the lower will be his opinion of himself, since the more he realises the depth of the former, the more does he realise his own insignificance in comparison. Hence almost all truly great men are modest, for they habitually compare themselves, not with other men, but with that ideal standard of perfection which they have ever present

to their minds—a standard which greatly transcends the conceptions of the vulgar—and such men are wont chiefly to consider how far they themselves are from approaching it. Whereas the vulgar readily, and sometimes with perfect truth, believe themselves to have not only attained, but surpassed, the ideal of perfection of which alone their minds are capable.

No society is calculated long to please, save that of persons by whom we desire to be esteemed. Therefore, if women desire that their society should not soon pall on men, it behoves them to endeavour so to mould their characters that men may have an enduring desire for their esteem.

In the present century it is held that the negro is of a race and origin absolutely distinct from that of the white man, and yet that he is absolutely equal to the latter as regards the rights of man. In the sixteenth century it was held that he sprang from the same source as do the whites, and belonged to the same family; and yet it was then maintained, especially by the Spanish theologians, that, in the matter of rights, the negro was, by nature and by the divine will, immeasurably inferior to us. In both of these centuries the blacks were, and are, bought and sold, and forced to labour in chains under the scourge of the task-master. Such are ethics, and such and no more is the influence exercised over the actions of men by theories of moral duty!

There is a well-known letter from Cicero to Lucceius, in which he seeks to induce the latter to write the history of

the conspiracy of Catiline ; and there is another letter, not so well known, but no less curious, in which the Emperor Verus requests his preceptor Fronto to write, as he accordingly did, an account of his imperial pupil's expedition against the Parthians. These two documents are, in character and purport, not at all unlike many letters which are nowadays addressed to journalists ; the chief difference being that the modern self-advertisers want leading articles written in their glorification, while those of antiquity, since there were then no newspapers, wanted books. And from both of these two letters we may infer how little credit is often to be attached to history, even when written by men who lived at the time of the events which they relate, and who enjoyed a great reputation in their time.

In its attitude towards great men, and especially towards those who display a great force and virility of character, the world resembles women. It does not merely admire such, it adores them. That force of character of theirs captivates it. And often, as we observe in women towards the objects of their admiration, the devotion of mankind towards such persons increases in proportion to the arrogance they may exhibit, the evil which they may commit, and the very fear which they inspire. Thus Napoleon was beloved by France, and was the idol of his soldiers, whom he called "food for powder," and treated as such. Similarly, many great leaders, who viewed and used men in the same way, were in life endeared to their armies, and to this day their histories enchant the world. Indeed it may almost be said that their very brutality and extravagance seem to have a sort of charm for mankind, just as women are sometimes

dazzled by these qualities in those whom they love. Achilles is always adored; whereas the amiability of Æneas, or the generosity of Godfrey de Bouillon, and the wisdom of both, or of Ulysses himself, almost arouse dislike.

In this world nothing is more rare than a person who is habitually endurable.

In any social gathering if two or three persons are seen laughing together in a marked manner, and for some cause unknown to the rest of the company, all present seem to become filled with apprehension; their conversation grows serious; some become silent; some withdraw; and only the more intrepid approach the laughers, and try to be admitted to a share of the joke. It is just as if near discharges of artillery were suddenly heard proceeding from a party in ambush; all would disperse in confusion, not knowing where the shots might take effect, supposing the pieces to be loaded with ball.

Laughter seems also to win regard and command respect even from those with whom we are unacquainted, and it appears to imply a sort of sense of superiority on the part of the laugher. So much so that if, as sometimes occurs, you should happen to find yourself at any time in any company where you are treated with indifference or *hauteur*, or even with discourtesy, you have only got to pick out a likely-looking person from among those present, and laugh heartily and demonstratively with him, and in such a way as to give the idea that your laughter is genuine; and if any of the company be inclined to laugh at you, laugh

louder than the laughers. It will be odd if, when they see your merriment, the proudest and most petulant of the party, and those most inclined to frown you down, do not, after a brief resistance, either beat a retreat, or come of their own accord to make terms with you, to court your conversation, and offer you their friendship. Great and formidable among men is the power of laughter—no man is proof against its spell. He who has the courage to laugh is master of the world nearly as much as he who is prepared to die.

Whenever, after a separation of some years, I have chanced to meet a person whom I had known in his youth, and not subsequently seen, it has generally seemed to me at first as if I was looking on one who had gone through some great misfortune. The bright look of joy and hope is peculiar to our earliest years; and the ever-present sense of receding youth and growing cares stamps on the most frivolous features or the happiest face a look, an expression, which is no more perhaps than grave; but which, in comparison with that of youth or childhood, appears positively sad.

In one respect talkers and writers are much alike. In the case of the latter, for example, it often happens that at first, finding them fresh and original, we are greatly taken with them; but after a time they pall on us, because we too often find that large parts of their writings are little more than imitations or repetitions of other parts. So in conversation, new and fresh talkers are often very agreeable to us at first, alike for their matter and their manner; yet after

some intercourse with them, they begin to weary us, and fall in our esteem, for the simple reason that most men seem under the necessity, more or less, of imitating and repeating either others or themselves.

They who travel, indeed, and while they travel, especially if they possess ability and some skill in conversation, often leave behind them in the places which they visit an estimate of themselves much higher than they truly deserve; since the brevity of their stay in such places prevents the discovery of that defect so common to most people, I mean the poverty of their stock of ideas. What the traveller may let fall on one or two such occasions, and which, from courtesy or curiosity on the part of his hearers, will probably be chiefly confined to matters with which he is well acquainted, will pass, not for his entire capital of knowledge, but for a mere portion of it—a sort of loose cash, or pocket-money, so to say, rather than what it generally is, the whole or the greater part of his conversational fund. And this estimate of his gifts will remain undisturbed for want of fresh occasions for testing it. The very same causes render travellers liable to err in their observations, and to form too high an opinion of the persons of all kinds with whom they meet in their travels.

If the few men of true worth who seek fame only knew separately and individually all those persons who compose that public whose esteem they court with such infinite pains, it is pretty certain that the ardour of their pursuit would be greatly cooled, if indeed they did not entirely abandon it. But the human mind has difficulty in releasing itself from the influence which is exercised on the imagination by mere numbers. Thus we often find ourselves full of deference, if

not of positive respect, not for a multitude only, but for a dozen people assembled in a room, each one of whom we know to be, on his own merits, unworthy of consideration.

Jesus Christ was the first who distinctly denounced to men that extoller and enjoiner of all the false virtues; that detractor and persecutor of all the true ones; that opponent of all essential greatness which can become a man; that derider of every lofty sentiment, unless it be spurious, and of every sweet emotion, unless it be false; that slave of the strong, and tyrant of the weak; that hater of the unhappy—by Christ called *the world*—a name which has stuck to it in every civilised tongue to this day.

• This concrete conception, so vividly actual, and which has ever since been so universally recognised, was never, so far as I know, defined or denounced before that time; nor do I remember that it was ever even referred to in express terms by any heathen philosopher. The reason of this probably is that in earlier ages baseness and iniquity had not been fully developed, and civilisation had not reached that stage when its conditions become almost identical with corruption.

But such as I have above described is civilised man; and as such was he denounced by Jesus Christ—a development of humanity not revealed by the reason or the intellect; not announced by books or preceptors; incredible indeed by the mere light of nature; and which nothing but experience of life brings us to know, and to realise as possible. And be it observed how the lineaments I have sketched correspond to the characters of countless individuals.

That association of civilised men which we call society, or the world, is never denounced by the pagan writers as the enemy of virtue, or as tending to pervert and corrupt all that is good and noble in man. The world, regarded as the foe of all true good, is a conception conspicuous in the Gospel, and even in the profane writings of modern times, but apparently unknown to ancient writers. Nor will this appear surprising to any one who will consider a single fact which is calculated to serve as a reflector to any one disposed to compare the moral structure of ancient and modern societies; and this is that, whereas modern educators dread the influences of society on the young, those of antiquity esteemed them; and, whereas the moderns would provide in retirement and segregation an asylum to youth from the corrupting influences of the world, the ancients invited and even forced the young to emerge from seclusion, and subjected their education and training to the action of all the currents of social life, considering that the examples which it afforded were calculated to improve rather than to corrupt.

The surest way to conceal from others the limits of our knowledge is, never to transgress them.

He who travels much has this advantage over others, that the objects of his recollection soon become distant, and thus quickly take on that vague and pleasing hue of romance and unreality which, in the case of other things, nothing but the lapse of time can lend. He who has not travelled has this disadvantage, that all his recollections are of things which in a sense may be said to be present to

him ; since his every recollection is associated with places which are present to him. .

It is often observed that men who are vain and full of self-esteem, instead of being hard and egotistical, as might have been expected, are gentle, benevolent, pleasant companions, and willing to oblige. Believing themselves to be admired by all, they not unnaturally feel kindly towards their supposed admirers, and are willing to assist them when they can ; the more so because this seems to befit that superiority with which, as they consider, fortune has favoured them. In conversation they are affable, because they believe the world to be fully impressed with their consequence ; and they practise courtesy outwardly, while internally they take credit to themselves for their condescension and for their tact in combining regard to their dignity with familiarity towards meaner men. Nay, I have even observed that in proportion as they grow in self-esteem, they will sometimes grow in benignity also ; while their assured conviction of their own importance, and of the general consensus of mankind in acknowledging it, has the effect of purging their manners of all asperity—since no man who is satisfied with himself and with the world is tempted to be acrimonious—and of generating within them such serenity of mind that at times they willingly notice persons of less account.

He who has little commerce with the world is seldom a misanthrope. Your true misanthrope is not found in the wilderness, but in the world ; since it is not philosophy but experience of life which engenders the dislike of man-

kind—so much so that if a man-hater will retire from society, he will, in solitude, cease to be a man-hater.

I once knew a child who, whenever his mother thwarted him in any matter, used to say, "Ay, I see how it is, mother is naughty." Similar is the logic of the majority of mankind regarding their neighbours, although not perhaps expressed with similar simplicity.

When a man introduces you to another, if he wishes his recommendation of you to carry weight, he had best make no mention of your real merits, but rather dwell on the accidental circumstances of your fortune. If you are great and influential, by all means let him say so; if you are rich, let him announce the fact; if of noble birth, let him expatiate on that point. But if you are magnanimous, or virtuous, or polished, or amiable, or the like, he need not mention such trifles, even by way of addition to the other matters. And if you happen to be a man of letters, and more or less celebrated as such, let him not allude to your learning, or your profundity, or your genius, or anything of that kind. It will be sufficient that he dwell on the fact of your celebrity, for, as I have before observed, in this world fortune only is fortunate; and success alone, not merit, commands respect.

The man who has always dwelt in one of those small and confined communities where petty ambitions and vulgar greed prevail, coupled with bitter mutual animosities, is incapable of conceiving either the greater vices, or the

substantial virtues of society. As to friendship, he will regard it as a thing to be found only in poetry or romance, not in real life. But he would be wrong. I do not speak of such cases as those of Pylades or Peirithous; but good and sincere friends are to be found in the world; and indeed they are not so very rare. But the services which can be expected from such, when they are really men of the world, consist generally in words—which sometimes prove very useful—sometimes too even in actions; but very very seldom in substantial assistance; and he who is wise will not look for such. Sometimes you may possibly meet with a man who will risk his life for a stranger; but very seldom will you find one who will spend, or even risk, a crown piece for his friend.

And in this matter mankind are not altogether without excuse. For few men possess more than is requisite for their own necessities; and our necessities depend almost entirely on our circumstances and habits, since expenditure is usually proportionate to wealth, and sometimes in excess of it. While as for those few who spend not, but hoard, even they may be said to labour under this necessity to hoard, either in order to carry out some cherished design, or to provide against future needs. Nor is it to the purpose to say that this or that necessity may be imaginary, since few are the things in this life which do not either wholly or mainly depend on the imagination.

A high-minded man, as time goes on, easily becomes insensible to applause and fame, but never I think to censure or contempt. Indeed, it seems to me that all the

applause and esteem which distinguished persons enjoy, would hardly compensate them for the vexation which they endure in consequence of a single word or other token of indifference even on the part of a man of no account. Possibly with knaves the case is the same, only inverted; for, being accustomed to reprobation, and unused to praise, they would be insensible to the former, but keenly alive to the latter; if by any chance it ever fell to their lot.

Whoever has, or has had, much experience of men, will find on reflection that he has often witnessed, or even participated in, actual occurrences of so strange a character that, if represented on the stage, or set forth in a romance, they would be thought overdrawn and in excess of the licence permitted by the rules of art. Now this only shows that the vices, and follies, and inconsistencies of men are much more common than we think; and much more frequently than we should otherwise think credible do they transgress the bounds of apparent probability, and exceed even the extravagance of fiction.

People are never so absolutely ridiculous as when they try to appear that which they are not. The poor man, the ignoramus, the rustic, the sick, the old, are never ridiculous so long as they are content to appear what they are, and confine themselves within the limits of their true character. But when the old man seeks to appear young, the sick man sound, or the beggar rich; when the ignoramus poses as a man of learning, or the peasant as a citizen, then they are deservedly ridiculed. Even bodily defects, however grotesque, would never excite more than a transient smile, if

the man who labours under such did not make futile efforts to conceal them ; or, in other words, did not try to appear other than what he is. In short, a little examination of the subject serves to show that it is not our defects which are ridiculous, but our efforts to conceal them, and to make believe that we have them not.

So, they commit a great mistake who, in the hope of ingratiating themselves with others, affect a moral character different from their own. The effort to conceal the truth soon becomes unsustainable ; while the contrast between the assumed character and the real one, which ever becomes more and more apparent, renders the individual much more repulsive than he would be if he frankly avowed his true nature. For every idiosyncrasy, however unamiable, has some redeeming feature, which, being genuine, is calculated to please far more than any simulated grace.

And as a general proposition it may be laid down that the desire to sail under false colours is fatal to all undertakings which are infected by it ; and it is this, more than anything else, which renders insupportable many persons who would be bearable enough if they would only be content to be themselves. Nor does this apply to individuals only, but to societies and to entire populations ; for I know more than one provincial city of no mean culture and importance, which would be very pleasant places to live in, but for their irritating imitation of the ways of capitals, and the restless desire which they evince to pose as metropolitan cities, instead of being content to be provincial towns.

When a man makes open moan of his misfortunes, however real they may be, he often diminishes the esteem and

affection of his dearest friends ; so necessary is it that every one should bear himself stoutly, whatever his trials may be, and should present a firm front to adversity, preserving his own self-respect, and thereby challenging the respect of others, and compelling their admiration by his conduct. For if the estimation of any given man does not commence in his own breast, it will hardly originate anywhere else ; and if it be not solidly founded in his own self-consciousness, hardly will it find a place in the hearts of others.

Human society resembles the elemental fluids of the physical universe, every component molecular atom of which presses on and resists all the atoms which immediately surround it, and, by such pressure, indirectly affects those which are more distant in space ; while all these in their turn continually react upon, and exert a pressure upon, it ; but if at any point the energy of resistance be suspended for an instant, then simultaneously the entire mass of molecular atoms is impelled inwards with resistless momentum, and that one which gave way is immediately crushed out and supplanted by the others.

The years of infancy constitute, in the memory of each of us, the fabulous season of existence ; just as, in the memory of nations, the fabulous period was the period of their infancy.

When praise is accorded to ourselves for actions or qualities which we have often derided or condemned in others, we are ready enough to think highly of such actions or qualities.

Cunning, which is itself an effort of the intellect, is often employed by men in order to supply their deficiency of intellect, as well as to baffle superior intellect in others.

The world generally laughs at the things which it ought to admire, and, like the fox in the fable, condemns what it desires but cannot attain. A genuine and passionate love, with its alternate trials and consolations, is at once coveted and condemned. A generous emotion, or a heroic action, ought to be admired; but if men were to avow admiration of such, especially when observed in their equals, they would feel themselves humiliated; and therefore, instead of admiring it, they deride it. And this is carried so far that in everyday life it is positively necessary to take more pains to conceal nobility of conduct than to disguise turpitude; for turpitude is apparently the ruling principle of most men, and it is accordingly condoned. But nobility of conduct is contrary to custom, and is therefore looked upon as a sort of presumption, or it is viewed with suspicion as a thing which claims applause; which the public, and especially the worldly-wise, do not love to confer.

Many silly things are said in society merely from the desire to be chattering. But often a young man who respects himself, when he first enters society, is apt to err in the opposite direction. Such a one will sometimes hold his peace until an occasion may present itself for saying something of extraordinary brilliance or weight. Waiting for this, it often happens that he does not speak at all.

The most rational conversation which is to be had, and certainly the most animated, after all is usually made up for

the most part of frivolous or trite observations which at all events do very well for passing away the time. And every man must make up his mind to condescend to utter a great many commonplace things before he can hope once in a way to utter something worth hearing.

While men are immature their great desire is to be thought mature; and when they are mature their great desire is to be thought immature. Oliver Goldsmith, the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, when he reached the age of forty, removed from his address the title of *Doctor*; such a grave designation having become distasteful to him at that age, although, when a young man, he had valued it.

A man can generally be as wicked as he needs. When he acts uprightly, it may be supposed that he has no need to be a scoundrel. I have heard of persons of the most apparently sweet and harmless disposition committing the most detestable actions in order to escape some serious evil which could by no other means be avoided.

It is curious to observe that almost all men of genuine worth have simple manners. Yet simple manners are very generally regarded as a sign of little worth.

A habit of silence in conversation is pleasing and wins applause when it is known that the silent one could talk, and talk to the purpose, if he chose.

NOTES.

NOTE 1, PAGE 20.

Atlas was usually represented by the ancients as sustaining the heavens; but in Homer, *Odyssey* i. 52 *sqq.*, and in the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, 347 *sqq.*, he is figured as upholding the earth also.

NOTE 2, PAGE 22.

Epimenides was a sort of Rip Van Winkle of antiquity who one day, while tending his flocks, fell asleep in a cave, and slept for some fifty years; and, on awaking, naturally found the world much changed. He is mentioned by Pliny, Varro, Plutarch, and others.

NOTE 3, PAGE 22.

Hermotimus was a famous prophet of Clazomenæ, in Ionia, whose spirit possessed the faculty of quitting the body for long periods, during which it traversed the universe in quest of the secrets of futurity, returning at will to its bodily tenement; till at length, during one of these absences of the soul, his wife burned his body, and thus terminated his earthly career. He is mentioned by Pliny vii. 52, Tertullian on the Soul, and other writers.

NOTE 4, PAGE 30.

The custom of compressing the heads of children into peculiar forms is common enough among some races. Hippocrates mentions a tribe of Pontus in Asia Minor, called the *Macrocephali*, or Longheads, among whom a practice prevailed of compressing the heads of their

infants into an oblong form. And it was said that even when, after a time, this practice fell into disuse, the children of this tribe were born with preternaturally long heads, as a hereditary peculiarity.

NOTE 5, PAGE 36.

Regiomontanus was a German mathematician who flourished in the fifteenth century. His real name was Johann Müller; but as he was born at Königsberg, in Franconia, and as, in medieval times, the custom was to latinise the names of the learned, he was first called Johannes of Monteregio; and, subsequently, Regiomontanus. Vaucanson was the constructor of certain automata which created much excitement at Paris in the eighteenth century.

NOTE 6, PAGE 36.

For an account of the parrot of Nevers, see the lively poem called *Ver-Vert* by Jean Baptiste Gresset, translated into English by Cooper, Chalmers' Poets, vol. xv.; and also by Montagu.

NOTE 7, PAGE 38.

Baldassar Castiglione was an eminent Italian statesman and writer of the fifteenth century. After bearing arms for some time under Ludovico Sforza, and other leaders, he was sent to England as ambassador to the court of Henry VIII. At a later period he acted as ambassador to Pope Leo X. He employed his latter years in literary pursuits, and chiefly in the composition of his famous work, *The Courtier*; a sort of manual for the guidance of courtiers, which is remarkable for the elegance of its style and the acuteness of its precepts.

NOTE 8, PAGE 38.

Angelo, or Agnolo, Firenzuola was an Italian writer who flourished in the sixteenth century. One of his best performances was a paraphrase of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. The famous Macchiavelli, too, among his many other works, wrote an imitation of the same celebrated moral allegory.

NOTE 9, PAGE 39.

The goblin in this dialogue is called in the original a *Folletto*, by which is here meant a Spirit of the air, in contradistinction to the

gnome. The gnomes were Spirits supposed by the ancients to dwell beneath the surface of the earth; and to be the custodians of the precious metals, gems, and other treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth.

NOTE 10, PAGE 39.

Sabazius was an impersonation of Bacchus in Thrace, notorious for the unholy character of the orgies and secret rites celebrated in his honour. He was said to be the son of Jupiter and Proserpine. He is mentioned by Cicero, Plutarch, and other ancient writers.

NOTE 11, PAGE 45.

The sentiment here expressed in the text is almost a translation of the expression attributed to Chrysippus by Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum* ii. 64: *Sus vero quid habet præter escam? cui quidem, ne pulisceret, animam ipsam, pro sale, datam dicit esse Chrysippus.*

NOTE 12, PAGE 48.

Manoa is another name for El Dorado, the fabulous city of supposed boundless wealth, formerly imagined by the Spanish adventurers to be situated in South America, somewhere between the rivers Orenoco and Amazon.

NOTE 13, PAGE 50.

The Giudecca, or, as spelt in English, the Judecca, was the fourth sphere of the ninth and lowest circle of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*. It was allotted to those traitors who had betrayed their benefactors, and took its name from Judas Iscariot.

NOTE 14, PAGE 61.

David Fabricius was a German astronomer born at Essen, in Rhenish Prussia, in 1564. Originally he entered the church, but shortly turning his attention to astronomy, he studied this subject under Tycho Brahe, and resided for some time with him at Uranienburg. His poverty prevented him from supplying himself with proper instruments; and he was in consequence obliged to draw to some extent on his ingenuity. In spite of all the difficulties with which he had to contend, he acquired some reputation in his day, and his name is not yet quite forgotten.

NOTE 15, PAGE 61.

Lynceus was a character in Greek mythology, said to have been one of the Argonauts, and to have taken part in the hunting of the Calydonian boar. He was reputed to be so sharp-sighted that he could distinguish minute objects at a distance of over nine miles; and by some it was fabled that he could even see through the earth. In his treatise on the *Popular Errors of the Ancients*, Leopardi says it is uncertain whether the lynx got its name from Lynceus, or Lynceus from the lynx.

NOTE 16, PAGE 64.

In the year 1824, some of the German newspapers announced that certain lunar features of the nature here referred to in the text had been discovered by one Gruithuisen.

NOTE 17, PAGE 65

The question as to the gender of the moon has been discussed, among others, by Macrobius and Tertullian. Many of the ancients worshipped our satellite as a god, not as a goddess; and to this day, in most of the Teutonic languages the names of the moon are masculine.

NOTE 18, PAGE 66.

The Arcadians, an ancient pastoral people of Peloponnesus, claimed to be of greater antiquity than the moon itself. See Menander, i. 15, in *Rhet. Græc-veter.*

NOTE 19, PAGE 66.

Absurd ideas such as those mentioned in this passage, and in the context, have been gravely propounded at various times.

NOTE 20, PAGE 73.

The passage in Homer, here referred to, touching the helmet of Minerva, is to be found in the *Iliad*, v. 744—

Κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀμφίφαλον κυνέην θέτο τετραφάλῃσιν,
Χρυσείην, ἑκατὸν πόλιω πρυλέσσ' ἀραρυῖαν.

“ Her golden helm, whose concave had sufficed
The legions of an hundred cities, rough
With warlike ornament superb, she fixed
On her immortal head.”—*Cowper*.

Though some commentators maintain that this passage merely means that the helmet was capable of resisting the assaults of the armies of a hundred cities; or even, that it was adorned with reliefs representing the warlike chiefs of the hundred cities of Crete.

NOTE 21, PAGE 73.

It should be remembered that the word *mitre*, though it now means only a bishop's head-dress, meant in the original Greek, among other things, the chaplet awarded to the victor in athletic contests.

NOTE 22, PAGE 73.

The belief that the laurel was impenetrable by lightning is stated by Pliny, and others. The incident regarding the emperor Tiberius is mentioned by Suetonius in his life of that sovereign.

NOTE 23, PAGE 74.

Synesius was bishop of Ptolemais in the Libyan Pentapolis, in the reign of Theodosius the younger, in the fifth century. He was famous, among other things, for his letters and treatises on various subjects, among which was one on baldness. He was the contemporary of Augustine, and a disciple of Hypatia, in Alexandria.

NOTE 24, PAGE 77.

The following is a translation of a passage from the *Chronicles of Peru* by Pedro de Cieza:—

“The second time we traversed those valleys, after the city of Antioch had been founded on the hills which overlook them, I heard say that the chiefs and caciques of those plains of Noré used to scour the territories of their enemies in quest of all the women whom they could find; and having carried these to their own homes, they lived with them as with their own wives. And if these women became pregnant, the children whom they bore were reared up with dainty feeding until they were twelve or thirteen years old, and then, being very plump, the chiefs ate them with much relish, without regard to

the fact that they were of their own flesh and blood. And in fact they kept women merely to breed children from them, and then to eat them—the most horrible sin of all those which they committed.

“And I am led to hold this fact for certain, since it is corroborated by the experience of the licentiate Juan de Vadillo, who is this year in Spain; and if he be asked about my statement, he will declare it to be the truth. He himself has recorded that the first time that he and certain other Christian Spaniards entered on those valleys, they were visited one day by a petty chief called Nabonuco, who had with him three women. And when night came on, two of these lay down at full length on a mat of straw, and the third lay cross-wise, to serve as a pillow; and the Indian stretched himself at full length on their bodies, and took by the hand another, and very handsome, woman who was standing behind with some others of his people who had just then come in. And when the licentiate Juan de Vadillo saw them in this posture, he asked the chief for what purpose he had seized that woman whom he held by the hand. Whereupon, looking him in the face, the Indian calmly replied that he had done so in order to eat her; and added that if he, the licentiate, had not been present, he would already have done so. Vadillo, hearing this, and manifesting horror, said to him: ‘But as she is your own wife, how could you eat her?’ On this the cacique, raising his voice, replied, ‘Look you, I mean also to eat the child she bore.’

“This which I have mentioned occurred in the valley of Noré; and as to that of Guaca, which lies further in the interior, I have heard that same licentiate Vadillo say that he knew on the assurance of certain old Indians, that when its inhabitants went to war, they made slaves of the natives whom they captured, and married them to their female relations and friends; and that when children were born of these unions, they ate them; and that when these same slaves became old, and were not likely to beget any more children, they ate them also.”—*Chronicles of Peru*, by Pedro de Cieza, part i., chap. 12.

NOTE 25, PAGE 82.

Plotinus, the chief of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists, born at Lycopolis, in Egypt, in the beginning of the third century. After studying in Alexandria for many years under Ammonius Saccas, he proceeded to Rome, where he expounded the Alexandrian philosophy till his death in the year 270.

NOTE 26, PAGE 85.

In a note on this passage, Leopardi lays stress on the fact, or the alleged fact, that the incident here related actually occurred. The point, however, is not important.

NOTE 27, PAGE 88.

Alessandro, so called Count of Cagliostro, was an impostor who preyed on the credulous during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and who pretended, among other things, that he possessed the secret of an elixir which procured long life, and alleged that he himself had, by means of its efficacy, lived a hundred and fifty years. At his death in 1795, he was in fact fifty-two. For a full and graphic account of this adventurer, and his scarcely less notorious wife, see the essay on this subject in Carlyle's *Miscellanies*.

NOTE 28, PAGE 92.

Anton van Leeuwenhoek was a celebrated Dutch naturalist who flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Originally a maker of optical instruments, but devoting his long life to microscopical researches, he made some remarkable contributions to physical science; and was, in 1679, admitted a member of the Royal Society of England.

NOTE 29, PAGE 92.

See No. 11 of the *Lettres Philosophiques* of Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertius, the famous French mathematician and physicist of the eighteenth century.

NOTE 30, PAGE 93.

The employment of white stones to record happy days is a practice mentioned under the head of *λευκή ημέρα*, in the lexicon ascribed to Suidas, a Greek writer believed to have flourished in the eleventh century, but regarding whom little or nothing is known. The lexicon reputed to have been compiled by him is interesting and valuable as a sort of cyclopaedia, or commonplace book, of curious miscellaneous information.

NOTE 31, PAGE 94.

It is said that, during the period of his mental aberration, Tasso, like Socrates, imagined that from time to time he was visited by a beneficent and friendly spirit, with which he maintained protracted dialogues. This is related, among others, by Manso in his *Life of Tasso*; and the biographer states that he himself was present during one of these imaginary colloquies.

NOTE 32, PAGE 95.

Leonora was the sister of Alfonso II. d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, at whose court Tasso resided in the early part of his career. The poet was by some supposed to have cherished a presumptuous attachment for this princess; but his biographers are by no means agreed on this point, some of them asserting that his sentiments towards her did not exceed the limits of gratitude and devotion to an accomplished and gracious patroness. In consequence of the extravagances which he betrayed in his mental alienation, the Duke caused him to be placed under restraint in the hospital of St. Anna in Ferrara, where he was confined for seven years.

NOTE 33, PAGE 116.

Frederick Ruysch was a celebrated professor of anatomy at Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. He was famous, *inter alia*, for his collection of anatomical preparations, which comprised certain entire cadavers, preserved on a system of his own invention, and commonly called Ruysch's Mummies. And see Fontenelle, *Éloge de Monsieur Ruysch*.

NOTE 34, PAGE 118.

The Ruysch Mummies were visited, on two occasions, by the Czar Peter the Great; and were eventually purchased by him, and removed to St. Petersburg.

NOTE 35, PAGE 118.

It was supposed that Ruysch preserved his cadavers by the injection of certain liquids, invented by himself.

NOTE 36, PAGE 155.

The Hanno here referred to was, it need hardly be said, not the famous Carthaginian general of that name, but a traveller of the same name and country, who wrote, in the Punic language, an account of a voyage which he had made round Africa. This work was translated into Greek, and still exists.

NOTE 37, PAGE 157.

A headland on the island of Leucas in the Ionian Sea, not far from the coast of Epirus, whence despairing lovers used to throw themselves into the sea, in the hope of thereby escaping the torments of passion. Among others, Sappho is said to have taken this desperate step, in order to shake off her passion for Phaon, the beautiful boatman of Mitylene.

NOTE 38, PAGE 160.

Amelius was a Greek philosopher of the Neoplatonic school, who lived towards the close of the third century. He is said to have been a disciple of Plotinus, and the instructor of Porphyry. None of his writings have reached us, except a fragment of a commentary on the opening part of the gospel according to St. John.

NOTE 39, PAGE 163.

The sentiment to the effect that man is the most afflicted of all animals is obviously an allusion to Homer's *Iliad*, xvii. 446--

οὐ μὲν γάρ τί τοῦ ἔστιν δεινιώτερον ἀνδρὸς
πάντων, ὅσσα τε γαῖαν ἐπι πνέει τε καὶ ἔρει.

- • "For in good sooth of all that breathes or moves,
Nought is more wretched on the earth than man."

—Cordery.

NOTE 40, PAGE 173.

Timander and Eleander are fictitious characters. The former name means, he who honours men; the latter, he who pities them. This, *propter simplicitatem laiorum*.

NOTE 41, PAGE 195.

Almagest is an Arabic corruption of the title of the great work¹ of the astronomer Ptolemy. It bore the Greek name of *μεγάλη σύνταξις τῆς ἀστρονομίας*, or the great system of astronomy. In order to distinguish this from his other works, as well as in recognition of its supreme merits, the Greeks soon came to apply to it the title, in brief, of *μέγιστη*; that is, the greatest of his works. This title, with the prefix of their definite article, the Arabians soon corrupted into Almagest; by which name it is now very generally known.

NOTE 42, PAGE 195.

Sacrobosco is the latinised form of Holywood. John Holywood, or, as he is sometimes called, Holybush, or Halifax, was a distinguished professor of astronomy in Paris in the thirteenth century. His principal work, *De Sphæra Mundi*, was for several centuries regarded as one of standard authority, and was many times reprinted, with annotations and commentaries.

NOTE 43, PAGE 196.

It should be remembered that Copernicus originally studied for the church, and, at the age of twenty-four, was made a canon of the cathedral of Frauenberg, in the diocese of Ermeland in Prussia. Yet he never became a priest, but devoted his life mainly to the study of astronomy.

NOTE 44, PAGE 206.

Copernicus did in fact dedicate his work to Pope Paul III. It is a curious fact that his theories were favourably received by Catholic churchmen; but were bitterly denounced by the Protestants. Luther characterised him as a presumptuous and ignorant fool, who dared to propound views at variance with Scripture, and Melancthon urged that the secular power should suppress such mischievous doctrines.

NOTE 45, PAGE 206.

Porphyrius, or Porphyry, originally named Malchus, was one of the most attached followers and disciples of Plotinus (see Note 25),

on whose decease he succeeded to the position of head of the school of Alexandrian philosophy at Rome. He was of a melancholy temperament, and at one time contemplated suicide, from which purpose he was dissuaded by Plotinus.

NOTE 46, PAGE 207.

Eunapius was a Greek historian of the fourth century, who wrote, among other things, the *Lives of the Sophists*; and a *History of the Empire*, from A.D. 270 to 404. He was in his tenets a Neoplatonist.

NOTE 47, PAGE 248.

The curious and somewhat perverse line of reasoning pursued in this *Thought*, is probably attributable to, or connected with, the unhappy relations which subsisted between Leopardi and his father, as noted in the Introduction to this volume.

NOTE 48, PAGE 254.

Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece, was born at Miletus in Ionia, in the seventh century before the Christian era. He excelled in geometry, astronomy, and philosophy.

P. M.

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